

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

BY

Calvary Chapel Outreach Fellowship

Lesson 31 **Keep a Pure Heart**

By

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1

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The Lord gave Moses the plans and the instructions for the building of the tabernacle which is a model of heavenly things. The tabernacle was built; and thus, in the book of Leviticus the Lord begins to instruct Moses concerning the various offerings that were to be offered unto the Lord. There was the burnt offering, the offering of consecration unto God; the peace offering, that offering of communion with God; and then the sin offerings, and the trespass offerings. And so, having given him now the instructions on how the various offerings were to be made, the various ways the animals were to be cut up, and the various parts of the animals that were to be burned unto the Lord, the whole thing is all set up.

That beautiful moment has come for a trial run. Now they are going to actually do it. God has given all the instructions. The tabernacle has been built and so the congregation of Israel gathers together around the tabernacle. And according to the instructions of the Lord, Moses and Aaron went in and offered before the Lord a sin offering, the burnt sacrifice, and the peace offering.

In Leviticus 9 we read,

And Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering, and the burnt offering, and the peace offerings.
And Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out, and blessed the people: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people.
And there came a fire out from before the Lord and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted and they fell on their faces. ([Leviticus 9:22–24](#))

This was a tremendous movement of God and tremendous excitement among the people. God was being glorified among His people. The offering had now been offered. They had obeyed the commandment of God; the tabernacle was built. They are now going through the actual ceremonies to inaugurate and to initiate this whole thing, and God's presence, God's power, and God's fire came down. The glory of the Lord appeared to the people and the fire of God came out. And the people saw it and they were in awe of this glorious work of God. They fell on their faces worshipping God.

And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not.
And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.
Then Moses said unto Aaron, "This is it that the LORD spake, saying, 'I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace. ([Leviticus 10:1–3](#), KJV)

God wants to work among His people. God wants to manifest His glory to His people. God wants to move, by His Spirit, among the people. But unfortunately, many times as it happened here, when God's Spirit begins to move and the hearts and the lives of the people are being touched by God, there are certain people with spiritual insensitivity. And because there is an excitement and an emotion of the moment, because God is moving, they do not have enough spiritual

discernment to just let God move. They have to somehow insert and interject themselves upon the scene.

Now the Scripture does not really specify what the strange fire was, so it gives us an opportunity of exposition. The fact that Moses explained that this was what God was talking about when He said, “I will be glorified,” would seem to indicate that somehow Nadab and Abihu were trying to catch some of the glory. “Hey man, I am pretty important here. Look at me! I have my golden incense. Look, I am offering it before God. You see, I am trying to get on the scene. God is moving I want to get in. I want people to see me. I am important around here. I am a priest. I am in this thing, too, folks. See, what I am doing.”

But God will not share His glory with man. And God has no intention or desire to bring glory to your name. One important thing in the ministry is that we must minister in such a way that when men see the good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven (cf. Matthew 5:16). We let our lights so shine before men. Now it is possible to let your light so shine before men that when they see your good works, they go around saying what a wonderful person you are. Your light is shining the wrong way. Let your light so shine that it brings glory to God and not unto man.

There is an evil about our flesh. I have come to hate my flesh. But there is this crazy mix of emotions because I love it too. It is a love/hate relationship. Even when I am engaged in some of the most spiritual activities, my flesh can get in the way. My flesh wants recognition. My flesh wants a little glory and a little attention. I want people to think that I am a deeply spiritual person. I want the people in the church to think that I am really a spiritual giant. I want them to admire my walk with God. And because of that horrible desire of my flesh, there are times when I sort of let it slip that when I was in prayer this morning, waiting upon God, the Lord came into the room and spoke to my heart. And the people think, “Oh, he was up in the morning praying. Isn’t that beautiful? My, that is powerful. God bless him! Oh, I wish I were spiritual like that.”

Jesus said,

Take heed to yourself that you do not your righteousness before men to be seen of men. For verily I say unto you, ye have your reward. (cf. [Matthew 6:1](#))

Then Jesus talked about how you prayed, and how you gave, and how you mortified the flesh. And there are two ways to do it. There is a way to do it by which you draw attention to yourself, and people know how deeply committed you are to God. And there is another way to do it by which God knows how deeply you are committed to Him. But if you are doing it in such a way that people might know of your deep commitment, then God does not seem to know of it. I am doing my works either before man, to be seen of man and to receive the glory and the credit from man; or I am doing it before the Lord, as unto the Lord, to receive the glory from Him.

It is not enough that I am just serving God. God is interested in how I am serving Him and why I am serving Him. God is looking at my heart. God is looking at the motivation. And when God looks at my works, He is not just looking at what I am doing; He is looking at what motivated me to do it. Did I do this because I felt it would bring a lot of attention to my ministry? The reporters might come out and find out what is going on out here. Maybe my motivation was for some fame and some notoriety. What was the true motive? Why did I really do it? That is the thing that God examines. I will be honest with you, I do not always know what my true motivation is, and many times God nails me. After I have done something and I think, “Well, that was all right, wasn’t

it?”—then the Lord really nails me. He shows me that my motivation was wrong. “You did not do that for Me. You did that because you wanted this person over here to recognize what you are doing. And that really was not for Me.” So it is not enough that I just serve the Lord. That is not enough. For Jesus said,

Not all who say, “Lord, Lord” are going to enter the kingdom of heaven. But he who does the will of My Father. For many will come in that day saying, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name? Did we not do miracles? Did we not heal people?”
(cf. [Matthew 7:21–23](#))

Wait a minute, these people are talking about serving God. But Jesus said that it is possible to be doing things of service and yet not really be doing the will of the Father. Not everyone who says, “Lord, Lord,” is accepted, but it is he who does the will of God.

Now we are talking about what these people were doing, but it was not the will of God. What they were doing was, no doubt, motivated by improper motivation and the Lord is not about to accept it.

It is difficult to be in the ministry. It is difficult to maintain a true balance in the ministry because there are always people who are trying to heap rewards upon you now. Our flesh would love to receive it, accept it, and acknowledge it; but God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Jesus Christ.

So, it could be that Nadab and Abihu were glory seekers. Things were moving and they were possibly thinking, “Hey people, we are spiritual. We want you to see our spirituality. We are a part of this whole thing, man. We are an important part here. Look at us!”

I have found so many times when God’s Spirit begins to move that, quite often, it is an open door for the flesh. And many times that work of God, that beautiful work of the Spirit, is actually quenched and destroyed because someone wants to get some glory out of the move of God. They are not moving in the Spirit, but moving in their own flesh and seeking to show that they have gifts too. And I have seen marvelous moves of God’s Spirit quenched by people who were looking for glory for their own flesh, seeking to draw attention unto themselves.

Now in the exercise of the spiritual gifts—which we desire, which we want, which we need, or God would never have given us—I cannot buy into this theology today that says, “Well, I really do not want those gifts. I feel that I have all that I need and I really have no desire for the gifts of the Spirit.” I do not agree with that theology because I know that I need everything that God has for me. But in the exercise of our spiritual gifts, we must be careful that we exercise them in such a way as not to draw attention to ourselves. We must not bring glory to ourselves because the moment we do, we are taking people’s attention off the Lord.

There have been times when I have been in beautiful worship. The Spirit of God has given me such a glorious revelation of the glory, and the beauty of Jesus Christ, and I am just caught up in the Spirit. It is just so glorious. And right in the middle of this glorious move of God’s Spirit, someone will shout, “HALLELUJAH!” with a shaky, dramatic voice. And it causes me to look around and say, “Who said that?” But what has happened? My mind and my heart have been taken off of the Lord completely and on to someone who was carried away in his flesh, who was seeking to draw attention to himself. He was not really praising God. He was conscious that God’s Spirit was moving, that people were being blessed. And so, he thought, “I want some

attention here, folks. I am spiritual. I am holy. Look how I can yell, ‘Hallelujah!’ I can shake and all when I do it.” But I am surprised sometimes that God’s fire does not come down and consume some of these people.

The Holy Spirit did not come to magnify or exalt Himself. The Holy Spirit came to exalt and magnify Jesus Christ, and to testify of Him. The effect of a true manifestation of the Holy Spirit will be to draw men’s attention and hearts unto Jesus. And in the exercise of your gifts, be careful that you do not do them in some kind of an odd, weird way that draws attention to you. Seek to exercise them in such a way that you blend, that you flow, that it brings the worship and the praise unto the Lord with the whole flow of the Spirit. Be careful that you do not get involved with “strange fire” and seek to offer strange worship to the Lord. The Lord does not want “strange fire.”

This strange fire was no doubt fire that God had not kindled. Now God kindled the fire there at the altar and it consumed the burnt offering, the fat and all. Where they got the fire, the Bible does not say, but it was not a fire that was kindled by God.

We have to be careful of “fire” that is kindled by our own emotions. And when God’s Spirit is moving, there is a glorious, emotional response within our hearts. But I am not to serve, or to make my commitment to God out of merely an emotional response.

Now many times there are services where an evangelist or a minister will deliberately work up the emotions of the people. And there are men who have, through experience, learned how to get certain emotional responses. By doing a certain thing, by saying something a certain way, or by manipulation, they know how to manipulate people’s emotions, and build people up into a high emotional pitch. And then people are offering fire that is not really kindled by the Spirit of God. They are offering fire that is kindled by their own emotions unto God, and that is strange fire.

There are attempts to work up the Spirit in a meeting, and there are men who are masters in the ability of working up a feeling and a frenzy within a crowd. They say, “All right, let’s all say, praise the Lord! Hallelujah! Oh, bless God!” They can really begin to work people into a frenzy. They try to work up the Spirit, rather than to pray down the Spirit upon a meeting.

God wants to work. God wants so much to work. God wants to work more than any of us really desire for Him to work. We think, “Oh God, we want You to work.” Hey, you do not want Him to work nearly as much as He wants to work, but God has a difficulty working because it is hard to get a group of people who will stay in the flow of the Spirit. It is hard to get a group of people without someone wanting to receive a little glory or attention all for himself. And God, so many times, begins to work and then there is a quench from the flesh.

Let’s go back to Leviticus 10.

And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying,
Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee,
when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it
shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. ([Leviticus
10:8–9](#), KJV)

Now remember in verse 3, Moses said, “This is what the Lord was talking about, Aaron, when He said, ‘I will be sanctified in them that come near Me.’” Aaron’s sons, evidently had not really been sanctified. They had probably been doing a little drinking and their judgment was probably

clouded a bit from their drinking. And so God warned, “Aaron, do not ever come before Me when you have been drinking, lest you die. And warn your sons too.”

Now, some of you feel a liberty in Christ to think that you can maybe have a little wine with your dinner now and then, or maybe an occasional beer. But God said, “I will be sanctified in them that come before Me.” And God warned that this is a statute forever. Do not come around if you have been drinking because God does not want you serving Him out of any false stimulation. God wants your mind to be totally clear and your judgment totally clear, when you come before Him.

Paul, in writing to Timothy concerning the choice of elders, said that they are not to be given to wine ([1 Timothy 3:3](#)). If you want to be an elder, an overseer in the body of Christ, then you are not to be given to wine. And you should make your choice. You may say, “But I like my wine. I want to have a glass of wine now and then.” Fine, have it, but step down. You can still be a deacon because he is not to be given to *much* wine ([1 Timothy 3:8](#)). But if you want to be an overseer in the house of God, let’s face it, you are not to be given to wine. And do not beg the grace of God as a cloak for deliberate disobedience to the command of God.

God is not interested in any service that comes from false stimulation. And herein, I feel terrible concerning the early years of my ministry. God knows I did it out of ignorance. I am guilty of stimulating people to serve God out of false motivations and false stimulants. I have motivated people to serve God by offering them, new bicycles, beach balls, and giant lollipops. I have sought to motivate people through carnal motivations, getting them all whipped up in a contest such as pitting the men against the women or the reds against the blues. And in so doing, I am guilty of encouraging people to serve God out of a wrong heart and out of wrong motivations. I have handed them the strange fire, so to speak. And I am guilty before God of giving false stimulation to these people in their service of God.

God does not want any service from us that is out of false stimulation. God wants us to only serve Him from a pure heart of love. Paul the Apostle said, “For the love of Christ constrains me” ([2 Corinthians 5:14](#)). Now if you are in the ministry for any other reason—for your sake, for your church’s sake, and for God’s sake—get out. In looking at your own heart, if you cannot say, “For the love of Christ constrains me,” as you are looking at your ministry; if it is not that compelling love for Jesus Christ, then get out! God does not want you to serve Him out of any other motivation than the compelling love of Jesus Christ that He has placed in your heart for Him, and for His work in serving Him. When this is our motivation, we will not go around talking about our sacrifices, or our commitment, or anything else.

I wonder how God feels when He hears us complaining or bragging about what we gave up in order to serve Him. “What could I have been if I had not given it all up for Jesus Christ? I could have been a total flop, an absolute failure, and I gave it all up to follow Jesus.” I wonder how He feels when He hears us complaining about what we have to do. I know how He felt when He heard the children of Israel complaining. He does not like complaints. He just does not take kindly to gripes.

In talking about giving to God, Paul said that it should never be out of constraint, never out of pressure, for God loves a hilarious giver ([2 Corinthians 9:7](#)). I do not care what you are giving to God—if it is funds or if it is your life—God does not want you to give it out of pressure or out of constraint. He wants you to give it willingly, from a willing heart, hilariously, so that you have given it to God from your heart because of your love for Him. You will not be going around griping about what you have given up, or griping because you gave it. And we have to be careful as we motivate our people to serve God that we seek to motivate them only through one

motivation—giving to God. Let them be motivated by only one motivation, their love for Jesus Christ.

You are not helping your people; you are hurting your people if you play upon their own vanity in order to get them to give to God. Some will say, “Now how many will give a thousand dollars? I feel led that there are ten people that are going to give a thousand dollars.” That is pandering to the flesh of man, getting him to receive glory because man wants the glory of standing up. “Oh, I will give a thousand.” “Ooh, isn’t that wonderful? Yes!” And if you use that kind of motivation, you are encouraging people to offer strange fire to God. They should give only for one reason, because God’s love is constraining them. You should serve God for only one reason and that is because God’s love is constraining you.

God does not want false fire. God refuses to accept false fire. It is interesting and also very gratifying to me to recognize and to realize that God will not even recognize my works of the flesh. You know one of the most killing things in the whole world is to try to do the work of the Spirit in the energy of your flesh. That is disastrous. Nothing will wear you down more, and wear you down to a frazzle quicker, than trying to do the work of the Spirit in the energy and the ability of your flesh. I know because I have tried. The work of the Spirit cannot be wrought with the energy of the flesh. And if I am able to simulate some work that is the result of my flesh, God does not even recognize it; and I will never receive any kind of credit, glory, reward, or anything for it. It is wasted effort. It is wasted energy and you might as well not do it.

If you are encouraging your people to serve God in the energies of their flesh, pressuring them and pushing them, you are hurting them. You are going to make them rebel against the church and ultimately, against God. And there are millions of people across the United States today that are burned out on church because they have been pushed into serving God rather than being called. They have been burned out in their flesh and they want nothing to do with church and nothing to do with God. They have been pushed and pressured into areas where God never called them, by pastors who were eager to see the work of God done, but did not have patience to wait upon God to do it.

In ([Genesis 22:2](#)) it says that God appeared unto Abraham and said to him, “Abraham, take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac...” Abraham did not say, “Wait a minute, God. Aren’t You overlooking something? What about Ishmael out here? He is a fine young man.” God did not even recognize Ishmael. “Yes, I am overlooking something. I am overlooking your work of the flesh.” That is what Ishmael was. He was Abraham’s attempt to fulfill the promise of God. He was the result of Abraham’s fleshly endeavors. “Doesn’t God want me to have a son? Yes, He wants me to have a son. Isn’t it obvious that Sarah will never be able to produce one? Yes, it is obvious Sarah will never be able to produce one. Well, if God wants me to have a son, and Sarah cannot produce one, then let’s get busy. We are going to have to help God out, obviously. God cannot do His program.” So in the works of the flesh, he took Hagar and she conceived and bore a son. And when Ishmael was thirteen years old, the Lord came to Abraham and said, “Abraham, I am going to bless you. Blessing, I am going to bless thee. I am going to give thee a son.” And Abraham said, “Oh, that is all right, God. Let Ishmael live before You.” “Yes, I will let Ishmael live before Me, but I am still going to give you a son by Sarah” (cf. [Genesis 17:17–18](#)).

God is still going to accomplish His work. But when we try to do it in our flesh, we only get in the way of God and we create future problems. Look at the problem that Abraham’s flesh brought upon him and upon his descendants. It is a problem that exists to the present day, for Ishmael is still after Isaac. One man’s work of the flesh created havoc for the people of God. It was a work

of the flesh that God refused to recognize. “Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac.” God did not recognize Ishmael because he was the product of the flesh.

People are going to be coming to God and they are going to be offering the fruit of their flesh to God. “Look God, what I have done. Here Lord, I offer this to You.” God will refuse to recognize that which you have done in the energy of your flesh, or that which you have done for the glory of your own flesh. So we need to let God’s Spirit search our hearts, for they are deceitful and desperately wicked. But the Spirit searches the things of the heart. Let God show us what our motivation is for being in the ministry. And if any of us are offering strange fire to God, let’s just thank God for His grace in not consuming us, and let’s either get in or get out. Get into the flow of God and the flow of the Spirit, or get out of the way and stop hindering the true work of God.

Let’s just wait upon God. Let’s ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts, revealing unto us that which we do not even know about ourselves—motivations that may not be all that they should be. God desires to bless our life and to bless our ministry. One thing that stands in the way of God’s blessings is us, and our own failures. Now the reason why we stand in the way is not because God does not want to bless us as we are, but it is because of what we believe. We feel and we believe that God will not bless us. The blessings of God come to us because of God’s grace, not because of our works. If they came to us because of our works, then they would be of our deserving and not of His grace. God wants to bestow His grace upon our lives by blessing us.

So put aside from your thoughts your own unworthiness in order to receive the blessing. And believe and expect God to bless you now with a new anointing of His Holy Spirit upon your life, just simply because God loves you. Even though He knows you and He knows your heart, He still loves you, wants to use you, and wants to draw you into a deeper love relationship with Himself. He wants to show His love unto you by giving to you, as love is demonstrated by giving. And thus, He wants to demonstrate His love for you by giving you His blessings, His power, and His anointing. And the goodness of God will bring you to that change, that repentance that you need, as you begin to experience God’s power, God’s work, and God’s love in your life. So just open your heart now to the blessing of God. Now receive from God a fresh anointing of His love and of His Spirit upon your life, just because He loves you and for no other reason—just because He loves you.

Now turn to ([Acts 20:19](#)). Paul is talking to the elders from the church in Ephesus of the true ministry, and his ministry among them. Paul had spent three years ministering to those at Ephesus. But as Paul talks about his ministry, we are reminded of his statement when he said, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Jesus Christ” ([1 Corinthians 11:1](#)). For God has called every one of you to a ministry. Paul wrote to the Philippians and said, “I have not yet apprehended that for which I was apprehended by Christ Jesus” (cf. [Philippians 3:12](#)). When the Lord apprehended you, He had a plan and a purpose for your life. God has a ministry for each of us.

Now, unfortunately, we have sort of divided the ministry. We have labeled some people, “the laity.” We say, “Well, he is a minister; I am just a member.” There is no difference. We are all ministers of Jesus Christ. Now there are different functions of ministry. Not all ministry involves the preaching of the Word. The whole body is not the mouth. Now God has called me as a mouth in the body, and I stand up here and teach. But that is not the whole body. The whole body is much more than just a mouth. Thank God! And thus, there are the eyes, there are the ears, there are the feet, there are the hands, and there are the fingers. There is a ministry that God has for each one of you and it is all vital in the total ministry of God to the community.

So, as he speaks about the ministry, it speaks to each of us because each one of us has been called of God to fulfill a ministry for the kingdom of God. And there are certain things about the ministry that are important to us. As we look at Paul's discussion with these men of his ministry, we find a beautiful example for our own ministry, as we seek to discover that ministry of God for our lives.

First of all, in ([Acts 20:19](#)) Paul points out that true ministry is serving the Lord. The true ministry is always a ministry to the Lord. Our true service is always that of serving the Lord. We have to keep this in mind whenever we minister. We have not been called to please men. We have been called to please the Lord. Paul said, "If I seek to please all men then I am not a servant of Christ" (cf. [Galatians 1:10](#)). I need to be more interested in God's approval than I am in man's applause.

So many times we get in a trap in the ministry and we look for recognition from man. We look for their approval. And we forget that, in reality, what we should be chiefly concerned about is what God thinks of my ministry. What does God think of what I have done? For that which is highly esteemed of man is often not esteemed at all by God. And so, in looking at my service I must always realize that behind it all I am serving the Lord. Thus, I look to the Lord for the rewards of service, instead of looking to man for the rewards of service.

I look to the Lord for the direction of my service, rather than looking at man for the direction of my service. There are many people who feel that God has shown them exactly how Calvary Chapel should be run, and they come and tell me how wrong we are in some of the things we are doing. "This is what we ought to be doing. And if you do not start doing it this way, we are going to go to another fellowship." And I say, "We can suggest some fellowships for you." It is not that I am not open to suggestions. I prayerfully consider each suggestion that is brought to me, but I never respond to suggestions. I always seek the direction from the Lord. Now I have been given some excellent suggestions. I have prayed about them and the Lord said, "That is right. You should do it." But I always reserve that privilege of seeking the Lord for the directions for the ministry because in reality, we are serving Him.

But in serving the Lord, we are also serving men because the Lord has told us that we should serve men. He has told us that we are to go. He has told us that we are to give. He has told us that we are to love. And so, in serving Him, I have to go the second mile. In serving Him, I have to give to him who asks of me. In serving Him, I have to love even as He loved me. And so the service unto man is, in reality, a service unto God. It is that which God has commanded me to do for men.

But really serving man can sometimes be sort of a bummer. You can really sort of grind under this. I think one of the most unpleasant tasks that I have is picking up cigarette butts around here. I just do not like it. I have searched within myself to find out why I have such a horrible aversion to picking up cigarette butts. I have come to the conclusion that it goes way, way back to my early childhood. From the time I was just a little guy, my mother used to always say to me, "Son, never touch a cigarette. Never touch a cigarette." And every time I reach down to pick up a cigarette butt, I think, "Oh, I am disobeying my mom. She told me never to touch these things." And I find that I hate to touch them.

A lot of people come to weddings here on Saturday. They are going to church and they are nervous. They have to get braced to go into church and so they will smoke right up to the door. Then they toss the cigarette down and they will squeeze it. They will twist their foot on it. It makes it harder to pick it up. And then they come on into the church. Well, it is unsightly to have

those cigarette butts out there on the patio. And so I walk by and see them, and I start mumbling about litterbugs, air pollution, and inconsideration. And as I am just sort of muttering to myself, the Lord speaks to me and says, “Who are you picking that up for?” “Well, some inconsiderate person that is in there.” The Lord says, “No, who are you really picking that up for?” And I say, “Well, I am picking it up for You, Lord. It is Your house.” And He says, “What are you griping about then?”

Now, if you realize you are serving the Lord, even in such a dumb little thing as picking up cigarette butts, you are doing it for the Lord. You are doing it as unto the Lord and it changes the whole thing. I have actually come to where I can whistle while I am picking up cigarette butts.

The Bible says, “Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God” (cf. [Colossians 3:17](#)). Now, you wives, if you would take that Scripture and put it into practice, you would realize that whatever you do is a ministry unto the Lord. Rather than saying, “I do not know why I have to clean up after that slob. He ought to be able to hang up his own clothes.” You realize, “Well, it is unto the Lord. I am really serving the Lord.” And your kitchen sink can become your shrine of worship. Maybe you really do not believe that.

Perhaps some of you fellows are having a tough time on the job. You feel that the foreman has it in for you, and going to work is just sort of a grind. You find yourself really chafing under it. Hey, whatever you do in word or deed do all to the glory of the Lord. Say, “Hey man, I am not serving you. I am serving the Lord. I am going to do this as unto the Lord. Not as a man-pleaser, but I am going to do this as unto the Lord.” For I am God’s servant and whatever I do, I am doing for God and I am doing for the glory of God. Whatever I am doing in word or deed, I do all to the glory of God, and it can change the complexion of your whole situation. It can cause it to turn into a joyful experience thinking, “Lord, I am doing this for You.”

I have done some rotten tasks for the Lord, but the fact that I do them for Him makes them bearable. There are some things that would be totally unbearable if I were not doing them for the Lord. There are things that would just absolutely have made me totally sick, but I was doing them for the Lord, and He gave me the grace, the strength, and the ability to do it. I pray, “Lord, I would not do this for myself, but I will do it for You.” And working and doing things as unto the Lord brings a glorious joy to every task. It gives sort of a halo to every activity as I serve the Lord.

Now this is what I must keep in the back of my mind: in all of my service, it is really serving the Lord. The true ministry is that of serving the Lord. And so Paul said that he was with them in all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind (cf. [Acts 20:19](#)).

Now one of the greatest dangers in serving the Lord is being exalted and lifted up in yourself. It is one of the greatest traps. Many ministers have been destroyed by this business of becoming haughty and filled with pride. It is such a destructive thing. It is possible that it can happen to any of us who serve the Lord. Maybe your neighbor is sick, and so you fix a bowl of soup and you take it over to them. And they say, “Oh, that is so kind of you! You are just the greatest neighbor anybody could ever have. Oh, I am so glad to have you in the neighborhood here. I wish everybody in the neighborhood were as lovely as you are and as sweet as you are.” And you may begin to think, “Well, I guess I am pretty lovely and pretty sweet, aren’t I?” And you start getting a little haughty and think, “How sweet I really am, and what a wonderful neighbor I am.” And you get lifted up in these things.

But Paul says, “Serving the Lord with all humility of mind.” It is a tragedy when ministers become so important that they do not have time for individuals. It is interesting how God always has a way of keeping us humble. He has His ways of just sort of putting us in our place.

One minister told about a Wednesday night when he was ministering to the believers’ meeting. It was one of those services where everybody was blessed, and it was one of those neat, flowing kind of experiences. And he was saying, “Oh man, I really did it.” And he started to leave the platform to go down and mingle with the people, thinking that it was such a marvelous moving of the Spirit, and that he was such an instrument of God. And as he started down, he slipped and fell on his face right down on the floor. That is a humbling experience to look up at the people from that position. And the Lord just sort of took the whole wind out of his sails.

Another example is after the third service when I have been standing before the people and go out to the patio to shake hands with everybody and greet them. As I am getting the feedback from the people, someone comes up and says, “Pastor, your zipper is down.” Oh, what a wipe out that is!

Now the Lord said, “He that exalteth himself will be abased” ([Matthew 23:12](#)). It is much better that you do not exalt yourself.

Serve the Lord with all humility of mind. The Bible says, “Let every man esteem others better than himself” (cf. [Philippians 2:3](#)).

And then Paul goes on to talk about the ministry. And he said, “with many tears” (Acts 20:19). It is so important in the ministry that we really be truly sensitive to the needs of others and that we weep with them in their sorrows, that we genuinely share with them in their trials, that we weep with them over their failures.

And really, I have shed many tears for my own failures. There are many times when I feel that I have just totally failed the Lord. When standing before you, I have taken a Scripture that is so filled with truth and potential, and I feel like I have totally mishandled it. Somehow it just was not there, and it just did not come out right. There was so much that could have been said, but it just did not come together. And I go back and I just weep. I think, “Oh God, how I failed to really represent You and bring Thy truth to the people. Lord, I am such a failure.” As I weep over my own failures and over my own inability, I am serving the Lord with tears.

([Psalm 126:6](#)) says, “They that go forth with tears, bearing precious seed, shall no doubt come again bringing their sheaves with them” (paraphrased). Oh, the attitude with which I go to do the work of the Lord is so important.

There was a young fellow just out of seminary who was filling his first pastorate. He had had all of the background, the seminary training, and all of the self-confidence that one can become endowed with this kind of education. As he came before this new congregation to ministry the Word of God, everything was just perfect. The cuff was showing just the right distance under the sleeve and he had superb diction. Everything was just so perfect—he had his act together. Everything was right but as he tried to minister to the people, it just was not there. In a sense, he fell flat on his face in his attempt to communicate God’s truth to these people, to the extent that he finally just broke down and began to weep. He closed the book and walked off weeping. Then a dear old saint down in the front row said, “If he had come in like he went out, he would have gone out like he came in.” We are to be going forth with tears bearing precious seed.

Then Paul says, “with temptations” ([Acts 20:19](#)). Now that word “temptation” is actually persecutions or trials or testings. As Paul was ministering, he was always being persecuted. He speaks here of the persecution arising out of the Jews who were actually going around resisting his ministry wherever he went. Yet with tears he was ministering to them, in spite of the persecutions that were going on. You would think that if a person was going around doing good, seeking to help people, and share the love of God, that they would just be warmly received wherever they went. But this was not so.

Jesus said,

If they have not received Me, they are not going to receive you.
The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have not listened to Me, they are not going to listen to you. If they have not accepted Me, they are not going to accept you. (cf. [John 15:20](#))

Paul was serving the Lord in spite of the obstacles and in spite of the persecution.

And then Paul goes on to say, “Holding back nothing that is profitable unto you” (cf. [Acts 20:20](#)). As a minister, you cannot hold back. You have to give until you have nothing else to give, holding back nothing that is profitable to the people. You must give whenever possible to help their physical needs; giving to help them in their emotional needs, and giving to help them in their spiritual needs. Never hold back, but always freely give all that you have, in order to minister and to help others as you serve the Lord.

Then Paul said, “showing unto you” (cf. [Acts 20:20](#)). He said, “For I have shown you.” The most powerful lessons are those that we can see, not those that we hear. There is tremendous value in the demonstration of truth. People learn far more from what they see than they learn from what they hear. And your life should always be a reflection of your teaching. So Paul says that his ministry to them was that of demonstrating—showing unto them. And that should always be the case in our ministries. Our lives should be a practical demonstration of that which we are declaring. If we say to people, “God wants you to love your neighbor,” then we should love our neighbor. If we say, “God wants you to be forgiving,” then we should show forgiveness. “God wants you to be generous and kind,” then we need to show generosity and kindness. We have to demonstrate and that is where many ministries fall down. There is not a practical demonstration of the truths that are being proclaimed.

And thus, Paul speaks of his ministry. The true minister is not one who just tells people how to live; he is one who shows people how to live by the example of his own life, living before them, showing them. He demonstrates to them how they are to love, how they are to forgive and how they are to serve the Lord.

And then Paul said, “And I have taught you...” Where did he teach them? He says, “I have taught you in public places, and from house to house. I have taught you publicly, and I have taught you from house to house” ([Acts 20:20](#)).

There are a lot of people that really dig that public ministry. They do not care so much for the house to house service. They like the idea of standing before great multitudes, but they sort of shy away from an individual ministry. God help us. The day you become so important that you cannot minister to an individual, you have become more important than your Lord. He was always willing to take time for the individual, and to minister to individual needs.

And so he said, “I have taught you publicly, and I have taught you in your homes, from house to house.” Paul was going around, giving individual instruction and exhortation to a brother.

What did Paul teach them? He said, “I have taught you that you should turn to God, and that you should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. [Acts 20:20-21](#)).

And then he went on to say that he did not count his own life dear to himself ([Acts 20:24](#)). Now actually, to really serve the Lord, you cannot count your life dear to yourself. You have to be willing to make sacrifices of your own time, of your own resources, of yourself, and maybe even of living standards.

You know, when Satan was before God, he accused Job of serving God for the material benefits. He said, “Look at the way You have blessed him. Anybody would serve You if they were blessed like that. Do not tell me Job is such a big guy and doing so good. You have prospered him and blessed him. It is no wonder he is serving You” (cf. [Job 1:10](#)). And he was accusing Job of serving the Lord for the monetary gain, or for the material gain.

Now many times people today are trying to make the same innuendoes that we are serving the Lord for material gain, that we might live in a nice home, or that we might drive a nice car. And Satan’s accusations are still prevalent, attributing false motivations towards the ministry.

I thank God for the first seventeen years of my ministry. No one can make false accusations against me saying that I ministered for the material gains because for seventeen years, we sacrificed and did without. My wife and I were just relating to each other this week how glorious it is the way God has blessed us. Now we are so thankful. We were remembering the day when buying a can of Crisco was a major problem in our budget. We would have to figure out what we could do without in order to buy a can of Crisco. It was a major disaster in our grocery budget. It would just wipe us out.

Our first pastorate was in Prescott, where we got fifteen dollars a week. When we took our second pastorate in Tucson, we got a raise in salary. We were getting twenty dollars a week. And they gave us a parsonage, which was one big room behind the church. We put a curtain up to separate our bedroom from the living room because people were always coming into the parsonage. It was right there at church. They would say, “We came to church early tonight, so we thought we would come back and say, ‘Hi.’” We were often trying to get ready and we would have to brush our teeth. Our kitchen sink was actually a dishpan. And we had a facet coming through a hole in the wall with no hot water, just the cold water. We had to heat our hot water on the big, old-fashioned stove with the high top oven and the burners. We wanted to brush our teeth before church, but people would come in. We would have to go over and get the glass full of water, take the toothbrush, and go outside. We had to spit the water out in the yard because we did not have any drain or anything back there.

We had to use the restrooms in the church, which were up at the front end of the church. And on the cold winter nights, that was tough. We had to go to a neighbor’s house to get a bath. And we lived back there just as happy as if we had good sense because we were serving the Lord and that was our desire, that was our life. We wanted to serve the Lord more than anything else. If serving the Lord meant living behind the church in that big room and getting twenty dollars a week—praise the Lord! We were happy to be serving the Lord.

And thus, for seventeen years we lived in great sacrifice of many things because we were serving the Lord. I worked, laboring with my own hands to provide for the needs of the family. I did all

kinds of jobs in order to provide for the family's needs, so that I might stay in the ministry. I used to get calls all hours of the night. And they would say, "Chuck, we have a body to go pick up." I used to get five dollars a body working for the mortuary. That was great because that meant that we could maybe have meat the next day. I would get up, get dressed, go out and pick up the bodies, and just really rejoice that God was providing for the needs of the family. They are going to die anyway so you might as well rejoice. Someone has to pick them up.

And so Paul the Apostle, speaking of the ministry says, "Not counting our own lives dear." In other words, we are not looking for the soft life, not looking for the easy way, and not looking for the comforts. We do not count our own lives dear. Do not have an attitude like, "Well, I am too good to do that. Well, I am too good to live there. Well, I am too good to drive that kind of a car." When I am serving the Lord, what difference does it make what kind of a car I drive, or where I live if I am serving the Lord? I do not count my own life dear. I am nothing special. The Lord is the one that is special.

Paul said, "That I might finish the course with joy" ([Acts 20:24](#)). Paul looked at life as a race course that was set before him. He wanted to finish that race, but he wanted to finish it up in front. He said,

Know ye not that they which run a race, everyone runs, but only one receives the prize. So run that you might obtain. (cf. [1 Corinthians 9:24](#))

He later wrote to Timothy and said,

I have fought a good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith.
Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, our righteous judge shall give. (cf. [2 Timothy 4:7-8](#))

My desire is that I might finish the course with joy, knowing that I have done the work that God has called me to do, and knowing that I have been faithful unto the Lord. Now there remains for me that glorious reward, as I go to receive the reward from the Lord for the things that I have done while in this body. I will receive from Him that glorious approval as He says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" ([Matthew 25:21](#)) Oh, the joy that awaits me when I have finished the course! And that is the way I want to run the race so that when I have finished the course, I can stand before the Lord and say, "Lord, I did my best."

We are to finish the course with joy. And then Paul said, "That I might finish the ministry that I have received from Jesus" ([Acts 20:24](#)).

The Lord has called each of us to a ministry. It should be the purpose of our lives to finish or to complete that ministry to which God has called us. And as I said, your ministry may be at a lathe, it may be at a desk, it may be behind the counter, or it may be at the kitchen sink; but God has a ministry for each of us. And your life is His; you are His servant. You are serving the Lord and you belong to Him. And the Lord is going to reward you for your service. And if God has called you as a mother and a housewife, then rejoice in it! Do your best to show by example to your children that love of Jesus Christ, that kindness. Show them the mercy and grace of God, so that you might live before them in such a way that, as they grow up, they will want to follow your faith and your walk with God.

Let us be showing, teaching, admonishing, fulfilling, and finishing the ministry that God has called us to. When I lay down the Bible, having preached my last message, and the Lord says, “Okay Chuck, that is it,” I will have not only the joy of having served Him while on earth, but also the eternal joy of reigning with Him. Oh, what a blessed hope we have and how marvelous it is, the privilege of serving the Lord!

Father, we ask that You would help us today to more fully understand our place of ministry within the body. And we thank You that You have called each of us for a special place and a special ministry. Lord, may we serve Thee with gladness of heart and with a cheerful spirit. Whatever we do, Lord, may we do it as unto Thee for Thy glory. In Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen.