

How to Serve God

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[0:00] Let us turn to Acts 20.

Acts 20, verse 18. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says that he was serving the Lord and there's some things that stand out in what he says here, especially looking at verse 19. He says he was serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and temptations.

I want to look at these three things. Firstly, to serve the Lord, we need to serve the Lord with humility, with humility of mind, with all humility of mind.

Did you hear about the preacher who said he had a wonderful sermon on humility, but was waiting for a large crowd before preaching it? He wanted to have lots of people to hear how good he put a sermon together on humility.

[2:03] And we can all think there's lots of little jokes about humility, about humility badges and so on. But of course, humility is something, if we think that we're humble, we can get proud even of being humble, can't we?

And that's a danger that we need to watch out for. And Micah 6, verse 8, the prophet wraps it all up as far as crystallizes everything about really what matters.

In Micah 6, verse 8, he says, He says that humility is all part and parcel of something that God really treasures and values there.

As to what doth the Lord require of thee? To do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God.

And sometimes we can miss that, can't we? We can miss that important walk that we need to walk, the walk of humility, the walk of walking humbly with thy God. It's important.

[3:08] And humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and he shall lift you up, it says in James 4.10. John Flavel said, They that know God will be humble and they that know themselves cannot be proud.

When we think really what have we to offer of ourselves? We've got nothing really to be proud of of ourselves. Really that all that is good is God.

It's like Paul says, There is no good in me. How does it go? In me dwelleth no good thing. In me dwelleth no good thing.

This is Paul, the leading light of the New Testament. The one that God used in so many tremendous ways.

Yet he says, In me dwelleth no good thing. And he could state how humility is so essential. And 1 Peter 5.5 it says, Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.

[4:10] Yea, all of you be subject one to another. And be clothed with humility. For God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble. God resists the proud.

Those that have that, the pride, those that think that they've got it all together. God resists them. But he gives grace to the humble. If you can just plead his grace. If you can just come before his throne of grace.

And plead his grace. He will give grace to you. He will give grace to you. He promises to do that. It's interesting where it says, Be clothed with humility. It's got the sense of an apron.

You know, I don't know. I don't put an apron on very often. I know Julie puts the apron on a lot.

Doing the dishes and everything. Sometimes we can neglect putting the apron on, can't we?

Us. All of us can. We don't put the apron on of humility. Be clothed with humility. Put the apron on.

And do some of that menial work.

[5:06] Those things that you might think are beneath you. That we should not have a pride that has any regard to that. Whatever we do. Whether it's some simple practical things.

Just as important as any other thing. And 1 Peter 5 verse 6. He says, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God. That he may exalt you in due time.

When you think of how mighty is his hand. That you know. I spoke one time before. How he measures the universe in the span of his hand.

Our God's hand is so huge. It's massive. Our God is so beyond and above. Anything we can compare him to. As we know. I know there's various preachers who have talked about the universe. And the stars. And the expanse of the planetary system. And it's just mind boggling. That we can't conceive of it. And yet we know that we can humble ourselves under that mighty hand.

[6:03] And he will exalt us in due time. It's wonderful to know that he holds us in his hand. And we have that wonderful safety. And that wonderful blessing of his comfort. And we need to be cautious and careful about pride.

Every one of us. We can all be subject to this dread characteristic of pride. I know I can be so guilty of it very often myself.

I must confess that. At times I have pride. And it could be. I could be proud about things that are true and right. Like I'm proud of the doctrine of our church.

Of our stand on truths. And yet sometimes when someone differs. You know we can. We can be lacking tact. And lacking courtesy. And we can have a pride that inflates and puffs us up.

And as the word says that you know. We should be careful and cautious that. Even though I mean the Pharisees. They were straight down the line. They had everything right. They had their eyes dotted and their teeth crossed.

[7:07] And they're the ones that the Lord vented his wrath against. In the gospels isn't. Aren't they? They're the ones. And yet the Pharisees. And they were so holy.

The word Pharisees. I understand it. It's got a context of separated. Now they were separated. They had a holiness. But sad to say their holiness. Got to the point where it was all about rules and regulations.

That weren't really in the Bible. And they made the mistake of going to those extremes. And yet it kind of sticks out doesn't it? That these are the ones that our saviour challenged.

That the pride that they had was so wrong. And likewise too I've talked how in some doctrinal dialogue I've had with someone. That they show a lack of grace. A lack of humility.

They're bombastic and proud. And if any one of us can think of our standing before God.

[8:07] That we're all unworthy sinners. And we're all inadequate. Unworthy of his grace. And if we look at things in that context. Then a fellow sinner who's not quite seeing the truth as you would see it.

As it stands. We can still implore them. And beseech them. And seek to correct them. But with that right spirit. That spirit of humility.

And that's what we need to be careful we have. At all times. And it's interesting. In the nation of Scotland. I've got this little Scottish quote here.

If you go to Edinburgh. And I've been to Edinburgh and seen Edinburgh Castle. And I'm told that this Edinburgh Castle. It was a castle with a tower of seemingly insurmountable strength.

But the truth is that the castle was once captured. The fortress had an obvious weak spot. Which defenders guarded. But because another spot was apparently protected by its steepness and impregnability.

[9:09] No sentries were posted there. And at an opportune time. The attacking army. Sent a small band up that unguarded slope. And surprised the garrison into surrender.

Where the castle was strong. There it was weak. And it can be true of your life and mine. That when we think we've got it all together. And we might point fingers at others about their faults and failings. That really that can be our weakness too. That we don't realise it. And we can big note ourselves and make that mistake at times. And let's instead have the spirit and the attitude of the greats of old.

And the truly greats were really sometimes quite unknowns. Really quite people that weren't the leading ones. They didn't have their names in lights. Or weren't recognised by the establishment of the day at times.

But we can look back for example at one man called Hudson Taylor. Of course he is well known. And this young 21 year old missionary. He arrived in Shanghai. And he founded the China Inland Mission.

[10:15] 12 years later. He founded the mission. And he became the first Protestant missionary to go into inland China. Imagine that. Going into this hostile foreign culture.

And the other end of the earth. And taking the gospel message into a language that you scarcely knew the way to speak. And yet God used Hudson Taylor dramatically.

And for the next 40 years. He ministered in this missionary work. And at the time of his death. In 1905. The mission had 205 stations.

849 missionaries. And 125,000 Chinese Christians. And Taylor also translated the New Testament into the Ningpo dialect.

Translated the whole New Testament into this foreign tongue. And near the end of his life. Two ladies came to visit Hudson. They'd been talking about him. And they wondered whether Hudson was ever tempted to be proud.

[11:18] And one of the ladies went to Mrs Taylor. And she did not know the answer to that. So she went. Mrs Taylor went to Hudson and asked him the question. And he was surprised and inquired.

Proud about what? Mrs Taylor replied. Why? About the things you have done. Then immediately Hudson replied. With the beautiful answer. I never knew I had done anything.

He was right. Hudson Taylor never had done anything. For it was God. Who had used Hudson Taylor. And worked in and through him. And that's all for any of us. Isn't it?

Whether in the Sunday school. Whether in the youth ministry. Whether in music. Whether in whatever activities of the church. Bible studies. And prayer times. And track giving.

Sharing. Personal witnessing. Whatever it be that God uses you to do and be. It's God who works in and through us. For his pleasure. For his good glory and pleasure.

[12:16] And his pride stopping you from becoming great. In the Lord's eyes. We can seek him. Ask him. In prayer. To humble yourself. Before the Lord.

Charles Spurgeon said. The higher a man is in grace. The lower he will be. In his own estimation. Not because he is comparing himself with people. But because he is comparing himself.

With the Lord God. We can be nothing in comparison with Christ. It's. All we can do is thank him for his grace and salvation. All we can thank him is that he has purchased us.

By the blessed blood that he shed for us. And he has taken us out of that miry clay. And set our feet on the rock. All we can do is thank him for that grace. That he would choose us.

Despite our inadequacy and our unworthiness. So Paul he said. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind. Let that be that mindset that we have. That we serve the Lord with all humility of mind.

[13:16] And secondly to serve him with tears. Paul says that he served the Lord with all humility of mind. And with many tears. And temptations. Many tears. Where did Paul get the ink?

Someone quote here. Where did Paul get the ink. With which to write his comforting letters. Where did David get the ink. To write his comforting psalms.

Where did John get the ink. To write his comforting revelation. They got it out of their own tears.

When a man has gone through the curriculum.

And has taken a course in dungeons. And imprisonments. And shipwrecks. He has qualified for the work of sympathy. It's true isn't it. That these men of God. God used because of the life they lived.

Of the experience they had. Of the tests and troubles they endured. And their faith shone through. Even though there were times of tears. And for all of us.

[14:14] We know any one of us can think. Back of times and occasions.

Where we've wept. Where we've had tears. Of loss. Of tragedy. Of grief. Of hurt.

Sad times. Times of tests. And trouble. And what are tears? The question. We can answer in different ways. The chemist will tell you.

That tears are a solution. Of sodium chloride. So salt. And calcium. Along with a few other chemicals. Mixed together. To make up the solution. The physiologist will tell us.

That the tear is the lubricating fluid. Out of the eyeball. It's secreted. From the glands. It's poured over the eyes. To keep them from becoming dry. And some would tell us.

Tears are something to be. Scorned. But we know that God's word tells us. Tears are something precious and beautiful. The psalmist put them in his cup.

[15:13] And he counted them. Tears are the distillation of the soul.

Tears are far more to do with the soul. Than they are to do with the body.

More tears are shed. From the pain that cuts the soul.

Than those that afflict the body. Tears are the concentrated extract. Extract of human sorrow. We could think back. Of loved ones we've lost. And we miss. Tragedies we've encountered.

People that we miss. Like folk that have come and gone from this church. I've wept over that. And brothers and sisters. Tears are something that grips us. That gripped Paul.

He said with many tears. He might have had those tears in warning. As we know. It says elsewhere. Verse 31. He says remember that by the space of three years.

I ceased not to warn everyone. Night and day with tears. There's times to warn people. You know as a preacher. As any one of us. We can warn and encourage.

[16:11] And as it says. That we should restore others. And watching ourselves. Lest we slip up. That we should warn people. And exhort people. With that love.

That constrains us. With tears. With that urging. That warning. That exhorting. There's times when you'll need to do that. What more important message can we have.

Than the message of the gospel on our lips. And woe to me if I preach not the gospel. And in Luke

7.37. We hear the account of a woman. Who wet such tears.

As to wash the Saviour's feet with them. And what did our Saviour say? He was blessed by her

tears. He counted that a beautiful thing. It was something he treasured. And he was blessed by.

Those tears of gratitude. As there were likely tears of repentance. As she came to him. To acknowledge the need of him. And she wept. Before the Almighty One.

[17:10] Bathing his feet with her tears. Tears of gratitude. Sometimes the Christian walk can mean tears. From disappointments. People might hurt you.

And sadden you.

And we know that's. Par for the course isn't it? Through life. We've seen. I know I've seen. Many things of such that. You feel so grieved.

And hurt. And wounded. And yet. We know. It's human nature to. To be uncaring. And thoughtless.

And. You can only leave it with the Lord.

When people act like that. Because. I suppose. We've all failed. And we've all. All can find fault. And tears. It makes us. Realise our. Our dependence on God.

When we realise. As that woman did. Bathing her feet. With her tears. Realising that. We are utterly dependent. Upon him. The law. The Pharisees.

[18:06] About. Only cast. Hatefull scorns. And. Snide remarks. You could imagine. And yet. Our saviour. Gave. His love. His forgiveness.

His unmerited grace. To her. And. Sometimes. It's through the. Tears. That we can see God. It's through. Her tears. That she saw the saviour. Isn't it? Through her tears. That she saw.

Her own. Lack. And her own. Sinful estate. That she could see. Through those tears. She could see the saviour. And she could hear his voice. And some.

Yet. Are too proud to come. And. Kneel at his feet. Some. Are too proud to come. And kneel at his

feet. They just. They would. Look astray.

And. Aside. At this woman. And not care about her. And not care about their own heart. And realize. Not realize their own. Absolute need of the saviour.

[19:03] And they're the ones who miss heaven. They're the ones who don't bow at his feet. In tears. And Jesus wept. Jesus wept. We know in John

11. As he saw. His loved one.

His friend. Lazarus. He saw. He was. Buried. He passed away. He saw the grief. Of. Lazarus's sisters. And. Friends.

About. And. Jesus wept. And. If Jesus weeps. Then so should we. Amen. Because. He should be our model. He should be our model. We should weep with those who weep.

We should care about those who. Are grieving. He's the man of sorrows. Isaiah 53. He was acquainted with grief. He knew exactly what it was to grieve.

To weep. He was acquainted with grief. And just the same as he knows exactly how. To comfort those who are grieved or distressed.

[20:01] It's wonderful. Hebrews 2.18 says. For in that he himself has suffered being tempted. He is able to succor them that are tempted. What that's saying there.

In that he has suffered being tempted or tested and tried. Our saviour was tempted and tested. As we know. Yet without sin. He was tested in every way. As we are.

Tested and tried. In that he has tested and tried. In that he suffered being tempted. He's able to succor. Which means to run to the aid of. To run to the support of. To be a help to.

To relieve. To bring comfort. And soothing to. Here's the one. So friends today. We know we can all have lonely times.

Sad times. He is able to relate to you. He is able to empathise with you. He is able to be moved with the feelings that you are moved with.

[20:55] Because he was moved with them. Jesus wept. And he is able to come to your aid. To come to your help. To come as one who would bring soothing and comfort to your life.

And it might be that Paul cried when he had to warn people with tears. As it says. And Spurgeon described tears as liquid prayers.

Prayers are liquid tears. Sometimes it's all we can do isn't it? As it talks in Romans. It's prayers that we can't scarcely utter. We can't form words to say.

It could be just groanings that can't be uttered. And it could be that the tears we cry are the prayers that God hears sometimes. Maybe you can get to that point sometimes. Maybe you are at that point. Or have been at that point sometimes.

Where you are just at the end of your strength. That all you can do is just cry. And just weep before him. And yet the Lord recognises that. And he is blessed by that.

[21:58] It could be tears of joy. Over his blessings. Tears of gratitude. They are beautiful tears too aren't they? Tears of gratitude for what he has done for us. And tears of a burdened heart.

For those that are without Christ. For those that we care about. Who are not saved. We can have tears for them too. And for us. For all of us I pray. That we've had those tears of repentance.

Whether they've been shed. Or certainly that sense of repentance. That reality of our repentance. You know Paul says. That we should have repentance towards God.

And faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. When we come to the foot of the cross. And we realise the extremity of what he has done for us. We realise the inadequacy.

Of anything we can ever do. To appeal to his grace. Then we must come in repentance. And we must come in acknowledgement of our burden of sin.

[22:54] Like the pilgrim did. In Pilgrim's Progress. That beautiful story. As he pictures there. As Bunyan pictured the pilgrim. Carrying this massive heavy load.

This bulky weight on his shoulders. The weight of his sin. Of the conviction. Of the dread affliction. That was his sin. And what did he do?

He came to the cross. And he left the burden down. He left the burden there. As he gave the burden. Of his sin to Christ. As Christ paid the price for his sin.

At the cross. Of course it's figurative. That it shows the picture there. That when we come to Christ. The burden of our sin. Is torn away from our back. The Lord looses us.

From that weight. From that guilt. From that shame. And as those tears of repentance come. As we bow our knee. Our heart to him. We find his salvation.

[23:51] His saving grace. Tears of desperation. Friends. As a Christian. I think sometimes we lack that.

Those tears of desperation. Those tears of travail. We should care about the lost. We should care about those without Christ. We should care as the word urges us to.

That the love of Christ constrains us. There's a constraining. There's an emotion there. Isn't there? There's an emotion. That the love of Christ.

His love in us. Our love for him. It constrains us. It compels us to have that message on our lips. To have that message imparted.

To those around about. However we can. And friends. So think of that. Think of the tears. Paul had tears I'm sure. As he preached. As he witnessed. As he testified. Both to Jews and to Greeks.

[24:49] Of that repentance. Of that faith. That message. Those tears of warning. And Joel 2. Verse 12. It talks about. Therefore also now saith the Lord.

Turn ye. Even to me. With all your heart. And with fasting. And with weeping. And with mourning. And rend your heart. And not your garments.

And turn unto the Lord your God. For he is gracious. And merciful. Slow to anger. And of great kindness. And repenteth him of the evil.

Think of that there. Turn ye. Tears. Serve him. Serve him with humility of mind. Serve him with tears. Lastly. Serve him with trials.

Acts 20. 19. Paul goes on. Serving the Lord. With all humility of mind. And with many tears. And temptations. This word temptations. Has the sense of trials.

[25:44] Of tests. Of troubles. Of temptations. Of trials. Of tests. Of troubles. And the trying of our faith. Is something that should make it stronger.

Knowing this. That the trying of your faith. Worketh patience. James 1. 3. The trying of your faith. Worketh patience. So as a Christian. When trying times come. It's actually going to make you stronger.

It worketh patience. In other words. It's going to make you more persevered. It's going to make you stronger. More steadfast. Think of Paul. What did Paul face? He had a whole arsenal.

Of trials. And troubles. In such huge number. We look at the accounts. I'll read. Some of them. Accounts of Paul's life.

And we can see. He had some. Avowed enemies. That were out to kill him. They were actually out to kill him. Committed to that. In Acts 23. 12.

[26:41] It talks of some. That they had bound themselves together. Under a curse. To not drink or eat. Till they had killed Paul. 2 Corinthians 6.

Verses 3 onwards. He talks about. That the ministers of God. Or the servants of God. Which all of us are. We should be approving ourselves. He says. In much patience.

In afflictions. In necessities. In distresses. In stripes. So. Being flogged. With the whip. In imprisonments. In tumults. In labours. In watchings.

Which are sleepless nights. In fastings. By pureness. By knowledge. By long suffering. By kindness. By the Holy Ghost. By love unfamed.

There's a lot of trying times there. Isn't there? That Paul had. He says.

[27:36] In verse 8. By evil report. And good report. We can all face that. As deceivers. And yet true. As unknown. And yet well known. As dying. And behold. We live. As chastened.

And not killed. As sorrowful. Yet always rejoicing. As poor. Yet making many rich. As having nothing. And yet possessing. All things. Look at the record of his life.

Imprisonments. Tumults. Which is like riots. In labours. Sleepless nights. Going without food. We've got nothing in comparison.

Have we? Brother. Sister tonight. What Paul faced. He served. In trials. In temptations. And he goes on. In a like account. In 2 Corinthians 11. Verse 23.

In part. He says. In labours more abundant. In stripes above measure. In prisons more frequent. In deaths oft. So frequently. He was at the point of death.

[28:33] He frequently got to the point. Where he was just about. To cark it. He was just about to. Give his last breath. He says. In deaths oft. Of the Jews. Five times received I.

Forty stripes. Save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Thrice I suffered shipwreck. And night and a day. I've been in the deep. In journey. In perils. In perils of waters. In perils of robbers. In perils by my own countrymen. In perils by the heathen. In perils in the city. In perils in the wilderness. In perils in the sea. In perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness. In watchings often. In hunger and thirst. In fastings often. In cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without. That which cometh upon me daily. The care of all the churches. In perils. Brothers and sisters. Paul's life was filled with perils.

[29:28] And crises. 1 Corinthians 4. A like account. Verse 11. Even unto this present hour. We both hunger and thirst. And are naked and are buffeted. And have no certain dwelling place.

So here he is. Paul's saying. We have no certain dwelling place. He's wandering around homeless. And labour. Working with our own hands. Being reviled. We bless. Being persecuted. We suffer it. Being defamed. We entreat it. So being defamed. Being slandered. We entreat. We are made as the filth of the world. As the off-scaring. Of all things to this day. You know. Paul hadn't heard about the prosperity gospel. He couldn't tune into TBN. And watch the health, wealth and prosperity gospel. And hear how God's going to give him a Rolls Royce. And all this caper. You know. He had perils. Perils. Troubles. Afflictions. Torment. Trial. In 2 Timothy 3. He writes to Timothy.

[30:24] So people tonight.

If you're living godly. In Christ Jesus. Get ready for some persecution. It's guaranteed. God says it will happen. You shall face it. You're going to suffer persecution. And will we be like those of Revelation 12. Where it says. They love not their lives unto the death. You know. It could come to it one day. Where we will be martyrs. You know. We should be his witnesses.

We should be his martyrs. In the sense that we should be willing to die for our faith. But even more important tonight to close. Is thinking about. Are you willing to live for Christ? Are you willing to live for your faith? Live the faith 24-7 by 365. Are you willing to have that kind of mindset that Paul had? A humility of mind.

[31:28] Not walking around. Holier than thou. Puffing yourself up. With the wisdom that you have. As I have. You know. Woe unto me.

I'm just the scum of the earth. I'm just the off-scaring. I'm just the filth of the world. In his sight. There is none good. So have that humility of mind.

That humility. That humbleness. Of spirit. That as the psalmist cried. That you can have the broken in heart. That brokenness in your spirit.

That he will receive. He will receive that brokenness. Of your spirit. Of your heart. As you come in repentance to him. You can have those tears. Those tears of repentance. Those tears.

And you can see him through your tears. You can see his reception of you. As many as received him. To then gave you the power. To become the sons of God.

[32:23] Even to them. That believe on his name. Wonderful. Isn't it? To think. That he would receive you. As we trust him. He receives us. And we can. Weep tears of gladness.

And joy today. And we can think. We can serve him through the temptations. Through the trials. Through the troubles. That might dog your path. Through the. Opposition that might face you. Through the persecution. That you might have to endure. As a man of God. As a woman of God. You might have to face some tough things. Serve the Lord through it all. Like Paul did. And he'll see you through. The Lord will see you through. And he'll say well done. Be encouraged. Be humble. Be. Prayerful. And be. Steadfast. Thank you.