# *Paul is our Role ModelColossians 1:3-8COL-051*

Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," number 29 in Colossians 1:3-8.

Never is the tragedy of being ignorant of the truth about the grace of God more painful than when a loved one dies who has rejected that grace for salvation. This is often someone who is a good person, and who has believed sincerely in a doctrine of salvation by one's own good works and personal morality. It may be a person who knows he is right in his non-biblical plan of salvation, simply because so many people share his belief in self-merit instead of Christ's merit alone for salvation. This may be a person who dies, who has trusted in a works plan of salvation of a large ecclesiastical organization into which he was born so that he trusts in his organization to take him to heaven instead of the Christ of Scripture. It may be a person whose human reason confirmed the dictum of the Mormon Church that nothing in life is free, but everything must be earned, including salvation in heaven.

## Salvation

The failure to understand God's grace alone plan of salvation by someone who has died brings great sorrow to those left behind who know the truth of God's plan of free grace salvation. The deceased also immediately learns the truth about free grace salvation, but too late, as the agonies of Hades close in around him.

Not only do most human beings do not understand the Bible doctrine of grace salvation, but they resent those who do, and those who choose to teach it. The Bible is discredited by these people in terms of being the inerrant Word of God, and as being the sole source of information about the divine plan of salvation. The teaching of one's church and of one's preacher, and priest, and rabbi is equated with the teachings of the Bible. It is given equal authority.

God's genuine witnesses, in fact, are ridiculed as narrow-minded bigots who think that their plan of salvation is the only way into heaven. Well, these narrow-minded bigots got that idea from the Bible, which indicates that there is only one plan of salvation. And, in point of fact, that plan has been made very clear. I direct you to John 14:6, which is a quotation by the Lord Jesus Himself, Who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me." Now that is very simple. It is ordinary, everyday Greek, translated into ordinary, everyday English, and it says that anybody who rejects Jesus Christ as the way into heaven is going to end up in the lake of fire: plain; pure; and, simple.

Furthermore, Romans 3:24 makes an added clarification about this bigoted gospel. Romans 3:24 says, "Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus." So, not only is Jesus Christ the only way into heaven, but that access to eternal life must be received as a gift from God. It is not something you can earn or merit in any way.

Furthermore, John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." So, we have an added factor there, such that the way we receive this grace gift of salvation is that we simply believe in Christ's Savior. We personally trust in Him.

In Romans 6:23, we're told, "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Then there is the great verse in Acts 16:31 that simply says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."

Now, that is what we Christians are accused of as being bigoted, because we take those verses, and we interpret them by what they're saying: that there's only one way to heaven, and that is by trusting in Christ as one's personal Savior.

## Satan

And if the devil can't get you to distort the gospel, he will try to get you to distort the way to use the gospel. He will tell you to come down an aisle to receive Christ as Savior, and bingo – you've added a work. He'll tell you to raise a hand for some good purpose like praying for you, and bingo – you've undermined free grace salvation. He'll tell you to join the church, and bingo – you've undermined free grace salvation. He will tell you to support good Christian causes, and you've undermined free grace salvation.

## Satan is Smarter than People

This is a very subtle thing. And you should never forget that of all the people that ever lived in the human race, including the great Solomon, no one can hold a candle to the smartness possessed by Satan himself. The Bible is very explicit that he's the best-looking creature that God ever created, and he is the smartest that God ever created. And he still has that capacity of intelligence and discernment. Therefore, he will come up on your blind side. And nowhere does he care to do that more than in this issue of the gospel.

So, we are faced with the fact that we know what the Bible says, and we accept it as the authoritative Word of God without any mistake. Therefore, when it speaks, it speaks in understandable language to us, and it is very clear that our salvation comes through Christ to pay the price of death in our behalf.

## Negative Advertising

The Bible truth about grace salvation through faith in Jesus Christ alone, and the doom in the lake of fire of those who reject it is viewed as negative advertising. You may have discovered that there's a lot of talk in this current political campaign year about negative advertising. Negative advertising is exposing the truth about other people that they don't want you to talk about. So, this business of rejecting Christ: Mr. Jewish man; Mr. Muslim man; Mr. Hindu man; Mr. Buddhist man; Mr. Taoist man; Mr. Shintoism man; or, Mr. New Ager man – reject Jesus Christ, and you are going into the lake of fire. Reject salvation as being His pain vicariously on the cross for your penalty of death on your behalf, and you're doomed. You need to accept that. Reject that, and you're going to end up in the lake of fire. That's understood as being negative advertising, because what does it say? It tells us that all the other religions of the world that reject Jesus Christ as Savior are going to go into the lake of fire. That tells us that any great religious system, no matter how magnificent it is, like Roman Catholicism, which adds human works as the ground of meriting the merit of Christ, is going to take you into hell. That's negative advertising, because it's telling the truth about something that is not complimentary to the individual. It condemns that person for what that person has done.

## Positive Advertising

So, what is considered to be positive advertising in our society? Positive advertising is to proclaim and confirm something that is a lie. Isn't that interesting? That's the way the devil works. And that's what the prophet in the Old Testament said: "You call good evil, and you called evil good.

## Multiculturalism

So, the Bible – the truth of grace salvation, which we find in the Scriptures, based on faith in Jesus Christ alone, and the doom to the lake of fire for those who reject it, should not be taken lightly. We are in an era of time when multiculturalism is the big thing. It demands that we mix all of the viewpoints (which all have a religious background) of the cultures of the people of the world. And we tell ourselves that the cultures that came out of the human-sacrificing cultures of the Aztec and the Maya Indians of Central and South America are equal to the culture that has come out of Reformation Christianity. And you can believe that if you want to. And you'll have to make your decision whether those cultures are equal. And isn't it nice that the United States did not originate in the human sacrifice systems of Satan as a nation, but it originated on the basis of Reformation Christianity, based upon the biblical authority of the Word of God.

Now, multiculturalism, in the nature of the case therefore, demands recognizing other gods and other ways of salvation than through Jesus Christ and His free grace reconciliation. There is a city in California. I think it's Santa Barbara. The city council voted a vast sum of money in order to put up a statue of the god Quetzalcoatl, who was the great god of the Indians of Central and South America, who is the god of the human sacrifices. And they want to put it there because it respects their culture. So, here in the city square of Santa Barbara, we've got this pagan god paid for by taxpayers' money. I wonder how many images have been created of Jesus Christ with taxpayers' money. Well thank God they don't. We don't need that. But you can be sure that the politicians would cut their risks and let the blood flow of someone who should suggest such a thing as spending tax money to have a recognition of the true God.

Multiculturalism requires other gods. . . And there is a question that has concerned us that we've pondered for a long time. Those of us who understand prophecy (the book of the Revelation), we know where history is moving. We know what the world of the antichrist is going to be like. And we've wondered how on earth a nation like the United States, with its powerful economic base, and its Christian orientation, could possibly fit into such a scene. Well, it's not going to be that kind of country. That's the answer. And very rapidly, our nation is being inundated with pagan cultures because we can't control our borders. And that pagan culture is not assimilating into American orientation and culture from Christian background, but it is overwhelming the Christian segment. So, finally we see, before our very eyes, again another signal that you folks don't have too much longer to be breathing on this earth. You're going to be breathing the rarefied atmosphere of the outer space, as you go shooting up into heaven in the Rapture.

This country is very rapidly, irreversibly being prepared for the world of the antichrist. If something should happen in this next election to put a break on that, it will be just an opportunity for us to reach out and harvest more souls before the inevitable end comes. But Satan, eventually, will get his man into power.

It is no wonder that we biblical Christians, with views like that drawn from the Bible, are viewed as dogs in our society, and that we are the objects of hatred. Jesus was exactly right and on target, of course, as He always was, when He said in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it, and they will be entering on the road to the lake of fire. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it." That is because most people want nothing to do with biblical Christianity that centers upon the Lord Jesus Christ. He was right in that.

He was also right, if you drop your eyes down, in Matthew 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name? And in Your Name cast out demons? And in Your Name perform many miracles?'" And they did all those things: "And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness." How did they do those things? By the power of Satan?

So, we deal with a powerful enemy. Grace is our only recourse. The Word of God is our only guide. Those who will appropriate free grace salvation as a gift from God become a wonderful new species of human beings on this earth.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away. Behold, new things have come." This wonderful verse is telling us that believers of the gospel are born-again spiritually so that now they have a point of contact with God. Most of the people you know, and that you'll be associating with this week, are only two-thirds alive. They're alive physically, and they're alive in their souls, but they are dead as door nails in their human spirits. Therefore, they have no point of contact with God, and no capacity to understand anything about God. You young people should understand it. You have friends. Those friends are alive physically, and they're alive in their souls. The soul is the area where you can think; where you make choices; and, where you have emotions. But they're dead (completely dead) spiritually. So, don't let those people influence you spiritually. Don't take their ways. Don't follow their habits. Don't be like those guys. You be out there in front. Let the herd be behind you, because you're a child of God who's in the know. When all the rest of them put their have their hats on backwards to honor the gang symbol, you put yours on straight front to honor the person of Christ. Do not be imitating that which is evil, which is what they do, thinking that they are smug, and sophisticated, and super people. Get a good slant on the people of Satan. They're dumb, and they're not to be esteemed. He who is a believer is the only one who is a normal human being, because he's alive in all three facets of his being: in his body; in his spirit; and, in his soul.

This person is in Christ as a result of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. So, he is eternally safe from Satan, and irrevocably destined for heaven.

2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us the born-again believer becomes "a new creation" because his nature has been changed within him. This newness is not the product of cleaning up our sinful ways. We don't become new in our Christian lives by discontinuing our bad sinful habits, though that does happen. What this is referring to is that the old status of being spiritually dead in Adam has been terminated, and forever reversed, so that we have the grace newness of being in Christ and being alive spiritually. Grace salvation is a message which we Christians are to proclaim to a lost world.

Romans 6:23 puts it very nicely together: "The wages of sin is death (eternal separation from God), but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus, our Lord" – eternal life through faith in Christ because He paid for your sins on the cross.

Now, we do this kind of proclamation of a true gospel of grace in the face of all these attempts by Satan to undermine our effort by challenging the grace of God in one way or another. And be aware that he's going to challenge the grace basis. He challenges our confidence in God's grace to bring us victory over Satan. The devil tries to get us to think that he's bigger than we're able to handle. That's not true. He challenges our assurance – that salvation is secure as a free gift from God by appropriating it without any commitments on our part from our sin nature. He challenges us by reminding us, as Christians, how unworthy we are to even be considered for such a gift of salvation. He challenges us by taunting us when we sin to show that we're really not saved. If we were Christians we wouldn't act like that. That's called Lordship salvation, and that is a very dangerous heresy that you should not fall into, because the devil loves to use that to taunt Christians who are not perfect.

Recently, in one of our morning prayer meetings with the faculty at the academy, we read the passage, and it was about sin, and it was relative to the perfection that was to be in the high priest and in the priest of Israel. And somebody brought up something about somebody saying that people who are religious leaders, if they sin (one of these great terrible public sins), that they can no longer be preachers and teachers of the Word of God. And I said, "Yes, I've listened to those people on television. The big boys who like to say that the bird with a broken pinion will never fly again. And I look into the eyes of those goody-two-shoes on TV. You know them all. They're famous. They have the hearing of people because they have the finances to be heard. And I think, 'Oh buddy, how many mental attitudes sins about you do we not know? How many broken pinions do you have?'" The only thing that's broken about them is their craniums.

My sergeant in the Marine Corps, at Paris Island, he stood before us to explain to us the workings of the M1 rifle that he was about to issue to us. And he was an old salt. And he knew that he had all these college men standing in front of him, who were in the Officer Candidates Program, and he wanted to emphasize his authority over them. And he said, "Now, when I speak to you, I want you to sound off. I've been on board ship listening to these 18-inch guns, and I'm kind of deaf. And when I speak to you, you sound off loud and clear. And get that through your 'coroniums' (craniums)."

I had the misfortune of standing right in the front row in front of him. And there was something about when he said, "You get that through your 'coroniums'" that just broke me up. He thought I was having a convulsion I think. I'm trying to contain myself, and I'm shaking all over, because he's got the rifle in his hand.

Well, get it through your "coroniums" that grace always gives you a way out. Don't go for that bunko. And don't go for someone that wants you to think that some gross sins are worse than some "nicer" sins. They're not with God. They're all sins. One's mental attitude sins are as gross in the sight of God as any other. Please remember David. None of us would look very fondly on adultery or murder, of which he was guilty. But please remember that he got kicked around for one year because he wouldn't admit it. He wouldn't make his peace with God by confession. Finally, as the psalm describes for us, he said, "I'm through, I'm broken up, I'm turning to water. My bones are all coming apart" – his apt description of what was happening to him physically. And he said, "I was wrong, and I admit it." And what happened? He became Israel's greatest king. And the next 25 years after that incident were the greatest years of his reign as king of Israel, and as the man after God's own heart.

So, never sell grace short when Satan taunts you because you have done something really bad in the eyes of men, or even in your own eyes. Grace carries us through.

## Suffering

Then the fifth thing that the Scriptures point out to us of Satan's techniques, is to have the devil point to the fact that we are experiencing sufferings as evidence that we are not children of God by the grace of God – that we're not under His grace. Here we are suffering. Here we are the good guys. Here we are serving the Lord. Here we are putting our lives on the line for Him. And what is He doing? He brings in these terrible sufferings into our lives. And the devil says, "How about that, good Christian? Do think that grace is so great?"

One of our taper ladies called me this past week from one of the states in the east. She said, "I've been listening to tapes for several years, and I want to thank you for putting them out – the marvelous instruction and the Word of God. The Bible has come alive to me. If I may, I'd like to ask you a question. My husband is an executive." And she mentioned a major American corporation that all you know: "He has just deserted me. And our home is not paid for. And now he has made no provision for me. And they're about to take my house away. And I have a friend who is a Christian who said, 'The reason your house is under threat, and you're in these circumstances, is because you're not living a good Christian life.'" And she said, "Is that the way God works?"

This poor lady didn't understand the grace of God. So, I tried to inform her that that is not the way God works. She has been treated in a monstrous way. There is nothing so low as a man who abuses a woman. And the Word of God says that any man who does not take care of his own family is, in the sight of God, nothing more than an infidel – some sorry unbeliever who is on his way to the lake of fire. And I said, "You have been horrendously, unconscionably treated. But the grace of God will carry you through. Pay no attention to your friend. She is obviously out of touch with the real God of the Scriptures. And she is out of touch with the principle of the fact that God gives us the logistical care we need for our daily lives. And what you must do is take the legal recourses," and I tried to give her some ideas on that. But I said, "God is not coming down on you in this way because you're not everything you should be. You're everything you should be because you're in Christ. Because you're in Christ, you're as perfect as you could be. He will deal with you when you step out of line, but He will deal with you in order to bring you to blessing. And if this was discipline, it will turn to blessing." So, my heart went out to her. But this is that same principle of Satan pointing to our shortcomings, and our failures, and trying to say, "That's it. Throw up your hands." What does he want you to do? He wants you to quit. He wants you to knuckle under.

## The Apostle Paul

The apostle Paul is obviously the all-time great example of the transforming power of the grace of God in saving a sinner from hell. Paul is our role model in serving as God's ambassadors to the world, proclaiming the message about the grace of God in salvation. He is the apostle of grace. Please notice some things about the service of this great man.

Few people have indeed experienced the grace of God in their lives as did Paul. Paul, who was the zealous, Jesus-hating, self-righteous Pharisee, who had been rescued from hell by that same Jesus Whose people he was persecuting. In Acts 9:1-6, we have that dramatic change that was brought about in the life of this smart, Jesus-hating Jew on that road to Damascus: "Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. And it came about that, as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' And he said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and it shall be told to you what you must do.'"

Elsewhere, Paul is told that he was filled with the Spirit when he met the man that had been appointed to explain to him what had happened to him. And he was saved. And then I want you to notice that after he was saved, he was water baptized. His water baptism did not give him salvation. He was actually saved right here at this point on the road: "Who are you, Lord? He knew he was speaking to deity when he looked up and saw Jesus. Elsewhere, we are told in Scripture that Paul, out of sync with the other apostles, was given the visual sight of Jesus Christ alive from the dead, and was given an audible hearing of His words. That qualified him to be an apostle. You can't be an apostle unless you have visually seen Christ alive from the dead, and have heard him speak. That is a scriptural requisition.

So, the whole bunko system of the Roman Catholic Church of Apostolic authority, and of transferring apostolic authority, that the Methodist Church claims, are totally false claims of authority. It's just a deviation. It's an excuse for deviating from a Bible as a place of authority.

So, Paul really knew what it was like, with what he had done, to suddenly be brought into salvation – eternal life. If there ever was a man who did not deserve it, that was the man. Paul grieved later over what he had done in persecuting those who were believers in Jesus Christ. And he considered himself unworthy of forgiveness and salvation.

In 1 Corinthians 15:9, the apostle says, "For I am the least of the apostles who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." Paul realized, however, that he had been a victim of false doctrine. So, he had acted toward Christians out of that spiritual ignorance. That brought him some comfort.

He refers to that in 1 Timothy 1:13: "Even though I was formerly a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and a violent aggressor, and yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief." This is the foundation of the principle of the doctrine of punishment according to knowledge. Those who have had little instruction in the Word of God, and those who have little spiritual enlightenment, who end up in the lake of fire, will be punished less than those who have had great opportunity to knowledge of the Word of God. Those who repeatedly have turned their backs upon the gospel, and those who have given the Word of God (the Bible) the back of their hand, they will be punished more severely. And here Paul says that he realizes that this grace was given to him because he did this in ignorance.

After his salvation on the road to Damascus to arrest the Christians, he was filled with a tender love for Jesus Christ, and he had an uncompromising zeal for the truth of the gospel thereafter. He was the hound of heaven who was relentless in his attacks upon the pharisaic and the political establishment, and in proclaiming the free grace of God in the face of the legalists.

In Acts 20:24, the apostle Paul could say, "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more." That was a tender comment to make in view of the verse just before it. Paul said, "But I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God." That was his mission. That was what he did. And he says, "Now I'm going. I'll never see you again. But I go with the comfort that I did not shortchange you. I told you the full counsel of the Word of God. No Christian has ever been a more powerful example of the transforming power of the grace of God than was the apostle Paul.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul says, "But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And His grace toward me did not prove vain. But I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me." Paul says that: "When the grace of God came through and changed me from a Christ hater to one who is enlightened, and a devoted of Jesus Christ, I became more zealous than all those of my age. I became more devoted to the Lord than all of my peers. And I was a better influence than all of them. I worked harder than all the rest of the Christians. And I was more gutsy than the rest of them." But he wants to make it clear that that was the grace of God who did that too.

So, Paul gave his life to and for Jesus Christ, his Lord, who had saved him. Paul never spared himself in serving God his Father in fulfilling his mission in life. He took his sufferings in stride, and he didn't whine. He took the sufferings in stride, because this is what the sovereign God placed upon him, and he didn't whine about it. He took his hits from Satan like a good Job, and the grace carried him through, and he came back fighting.

Acts 20:24: "I do not consider my life of any account, as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course." Each of us has a ministry; each of us has a course; and, each of us has a mission. How devoted should we be to that? And Paul never tired of proclaiming the gospel and of teaching the full gamut of grace-age truth.

So, in Acts 20:26-27, he says, "Therefore, I testified to you this day that I'm innocent of the blood of all men." He says, "Nobody is ever going to be in hell that I had an opportunity to testify to, and be able to say, 'Paul, if you had only told me, I wouldn't be here:'" "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God." He says that no Christian will ever be able to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, regretting how much he has lost in potential reward that could have been his, because Paul did not teach him the doctrines he needed to function properly in the devil's world: "I did not shrink from telling you the whole purpose of God." Do you know what that means? It means that he preached in season and out of season. Do you know what "in season" and "out of season" means? It means when people welcome what you have to say from the Word of God; and, when they don't.

That's what's hard in the ministry – to know that you're going to deal with subjects that become subjective because somebody doesn't want to hear it. I have been told by people, "I wish you wouldn't talk about that because it makes me feel guilty, because I think I have to do that," instead of saying, "Please pray with me. The Bible's right, and I'm wrong, and I shouldn't want to do this" – not to shrink from telling people the full counsel of the Word of God, and not to let them panic you into doing what God's judgment tells you is not a good thing to do.

This man Paul so loved the Lord, and was so devoted to his duty and to his mission that, at times, he had to earn his own support. Now that adds a great burden in the ministry. It's enough that you have to bring together the instruction of the Word of God. It's enough that you have listen to the problems, and try to give some guidance to people who need it, to administer your organization. But then you have to be the guy who supplies the money. Now Paul said that that burden came upon him. He not only had to supply for himself and for his ministry, but to take care of his associates. And Paul was very pleased to say that he did that. And he did it, in part, because he would never be a burden to anybody. He would never allow anybody to say, "I carried him through. If it wasn't for me he wouldn't have made it."

In Acts 20:33-34, Paul says, "I've coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes". Now, silver and gold we can understand, but clothes is kind of odd there. But in the ancient world, clothes were very valuable things.

Acts 20:34 says, "You yourselves know that these hands minister to my own needs, and to the men who were with me. When he had to, Paul went back, and he hired himself out in the tent-making business. He applied his trade.

Paul performed miracles because the power of God was upon him, and thus, through the power of the Holy Spirit's miraculous work through him, he confirmed his message as being the truth from God. He was faced with having to bring in the whole new doctrine of the church age. Nobody had ever heard that in its full detail that was given to him in that three years he spent in the Arabian Desert being taught by Jesus Christ Himself. No one knew all the details of the doctrine of the church age. The apostles themselves worked at the tail end of the Old Testament era. They were Jews within Judaism. They were only across the threshold into church-age truth. But the great things eventually came to them from the apostle Paul. That's why he wrote most of the New Testament.

In Acts 19:11-12, we're told of the terrific power of miracles that he had, so that God confirmed that what he was saying was true. And he said he didn't make up these things. The grace truth is what he's talking about. These grace things were so unbelievable. The Jews had nothing like this. It was all the opposite. It was like Paul finding himself as a Martin Luther: Who do you think you are, Luther? 1,500 years of church experience behind you, and you think you're right, and all these priests and prelates are all wrong. Yep, they're wrong because the Bible says they're wrong. And the apostle said that his message was of God. You could take a piece of cloth from his body and put it on a sickness on your body and you'd be healed. It was made clear that his message was from God. And that was the purpose of the gift of healing.

Paul treated everybody with mental attitude, goodwill love, while he admonished them and encourage them as a father to do right. Paul prayed that the believers would experience daily the powerful consequences of free grace salvation. In Acts 20:32. Paul says, "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified." Here, the apostle is speaking to believers. He said, "I'm leaving. I'm on my way to Jerusalem. You'll never see me again. But I'm commending you to the grace of God – the grace of God which can take you to such great heights so that your inheritance in heaven of treasures and of rewards is beyond anything you can imagine now." And Paul said, "I've given you a doctrine such that, if you use it, and you use the system right, will bring that kind of a glorious future for you, as well as salvation.

The Christian brethren were on his mind when he was absent from them. So, he would write these letters which we have in New Testament, expressing his joys and disappointment in them, and his instruction. He suffered a great deal as a minister of Jesus Christ. He suffered a great deal for telling people the truth of doctrine. But he also took that in stride at the hands of both Jews and Gentiles.

We have that very impressive listing of what he suffered on one occasion when he put it all together for us in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28. He speaks of all these other people who are carrying on as being great servants of the Lord, and these people who are in Judaism. Paul says, "Are they servants of Christ?" He says, "I speak as if I were insane." He said, "I'm going to talk the way they talk. I am more so a servant of Christ: in far more labors; in far more imprisonments; beaten, times without number; and, often in danger of death." How many times have we been beaten? How many times have we been in danger of death? This man gets beaten up more times than he can remember. For what? For telling people the gospel of grace truth.

Paul says, "Five times I received from the Jews 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. A night and a day I've spent in the deep. I've been on frequent journeyings: in danger from rivers; dangers from robbers; dangers from my countrymen; dangers from the gentiles; dangers in the city; dangers in the wilderness; dangers on the sea; and, dangers among false brethren. I've been in labor and hardship through many sleepless nights in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is a daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches." Paul suffered as a minister. What carried him through? He was what he was by the grace of God, and it was the grace of God that carried him through all the way.

There was a technique that the apostle used. He always moved people away from himself to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is very attractive to let people be attached to you, and to let people be very dependent upon you. Paul would not do that. He moved the Christians away from devotion to himself to dependence upon Jesus Christ. Paul knew that someday he would be gone, but the Word of God and Christ would always be there. If that's where their eyes were focused, and that's what their lives were built upon, the worst things would resolve themselves. The gospel was the truth. So, it was life-changing to those who believed it. The gospel in Colossae brought an intensive spiritual transformation, resulting in great zeal to serve God, and to store treasures in heaven. The spiritually transformed believers produced divine good works through the Holy Spirit, and no one had to remind them to do their duty. Whatever their job was in the local church, nobody had to carry the burden of seeing to it that they did it. They just did it. Why? Because they did it as unto the Lord. And grace was their motivation.

## Deception

Paul warned the Colossians not to be deceived by the people of Satan's world structure who create their false religions, and do not know the reality of doctrine. In the last book that he wrote in the Bible, 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul says, "Holding to a form of godliness (describing these people), although they have denied His power – avoid such men as these." In the religious world, there are people who are going to pretend to have a form of godliness, but they do not speak for God. One listens to the God of truth; or, one listens to the men of lies.

## Paul is our Role Model

### Do not be Intimidated

So, let Paul be our role model as servants of God and proclaimers of grace truth. In order to do that, you should not be intimidated and silenced by false doctrines and self-serving teachers. In 2 Timothy 3:12, Paul says, "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, but evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. You however, continue in the things you have learned, and become convinced of knowing from whom you've learned them; and, that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Do not be intimidated. Do not be silenced by false doctrine or false teachers who try to tell you that you are wrong – these legalists."

### The Samuel Syndrome

Furthermore, please do not be guilty of the Samuel syndrome. And how indeed I have to remind myself of this. When Israel was told by Samuel that they should not try to be like the other nations and have a king, and the disasters that that would bring, and the misery it would bring into their lives, they wouldn't listen to Samuel, the guy who had carried them through for so long, and the man whose voice was the voice of God indeed. And they turned and insisted that they wanted to be like the other churches. They wanted a king. That crushed Samuel.

So, God came to him in 1 Samuel 8:6-7, "But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they have to say to you. For they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.'" So when people rejected grace truth, and when people reject a ministry that really puts a perspective on our lives in terms of what God thinks; a ministry which really cares for family; and, a ministry which will not be intimidated by some heavy-handed people, but will stand for the Word of God, and for doing things decently in order, and then you get the back of the hand, don't take it personally. Remember that you are the representative of the most high God. And when they do that to you, they have not turned your backs and walked off from you. They've turned their backs and walked off from God. Do not be guilty of the Samuel syndrome of feeling crushed. But your sympathy and your heart should go out to the Lord God who is being deserted by those who have done nothing but good.

### Handling Rejection

The next thing, if you are to be following Paul's role model, is do not become discouraged in the face of rejection and desertion and slanderous representation. It really is irritating when people will slander and say things that are not true. But in Galatians 6:9, Paul says, "Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap, if we do not grow weary." Do not collapse. God will carry us through.

### The Battle is the Lord's

Next: remember that spiritual victories are won only by God, so wait upon Him. In 1 Samuel 17:47, David says, "The battle is the Lord's".

### You will be Disliked

Next: Do not wonder why that you, as a good guy and teacher of true truth, are disliked. You would think that you should be the one who is looked upon fondly, but you won't be. In John 15:18, Jesus says, "The world hates you. You know that it hated me before it hated you."

John 15:24: "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sinned. But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well." And the hated Jesus without a cause."

### Some Christians will Desert you

The next thing: Don't be shocked that once-supportive Christians will desert the work of God for worldly pursuits. This happened to the apostle Paul. He referred to it in 2 Timothy 4:10: a very sad passage. Paul says, "For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica." Demas appears elsewhere in scripture as one of the close intimates associated with Paul's evangelistic team. What a blow that this man cuts out, and goes into the world system. He was not non-religious. He still considered himself a Christian. He still considered himself one of the people of God. He wasn't an unsaved man. He was just a Christian who wanted to operate like the other churches and in the world system.

### Do not Return Evil for Evil

Finally, do not return evil for abuse in response to your sound doctrine. Control your tongue. And that is not easy. Romans 12:17-19 puts it this way, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God. For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay,' says the Lord."

Paul is a great role model. And if we follow these seven principles, we'll be imitating his grace way of life. Father, we thank You for this, Your Word. Bless it to our understanding and to our practice. In Christ's name, Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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