



## Sermon Series Notes

### "Above Average Christianity" (Acts 18:1-18)

Danny Hodges - NT3641

v.1 See I Cor.1:20-25; 2:1-5; Paul was verbally beat up in Athens, so he is “weak” when he gets to Corinth.

vv.5-6 It was extremely difficult for Paul to be repeatedly rejected by the Jews. They were “his people.”

Rom.9:1 I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--2 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, 4 the people of Israel.

John 1: 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

See Luke 19: 41-44

vv.9-10 Paul’s humanity shines through here, for God would not say “Do not be afraid” if Paul was not afraid! And the Lord would not encourage him to keep on speaking if he was not tempted to hold back in his ministry of preaching and teaching.

Ever been tempted to hold back in your confession of/commitment to Jesus Christ? Peter, etc.

v.11 Paul believed the Lord’s encouraging word to him, so he stayed in a place the Lord said he would not get beat up for a year and a half!

vv.12-13 I think this had to challenge Paul’s faith in the Lord’s word to him about not being attacked or harmed.

vv.14-17 Finally, somebody taking a beating other than Paul! I’m sure Paul appreciated the reprieve here, even though he knew that down the road more suffering awaited him.

Apparently, when *Crispus* trusted in Jesus, he was replaced as *ruler of the synagogue* (verse 8) by Sosthenes, who later himself seems to have become a Christian (1 Corinthians 1:1).

v.18 This was undoubtedly a Nazirite vow (See Numbers 6:1-8). Usually, when a Nazirite vow was completed, one’s hair, which had been allowed to freely grow, was cut off and offered to the Lord in a

special ceremony at the temple in Jerusalem. The OT character Samson was called to be a Nazirite from birth, for his whole life, and this is why he was to never cut his hair.

The purpose of the Nazirite vow was to express a unique consecration to God. It was not mandatory, but voluntary.

Consecration is a solemn dedication to a special purpose or service, usually religious. The word literally means “association with the sacred.”

Consecration: Dedication

Dedication: Devotion, enthusiasm, commitment.

Vow: Promise, oath, pledge; a personal commitment; An earnest promise to perform a specified act or behave in a certain manner.

Possible Reasons for Paul's Vow:

- Commitment to keep the message of the gospel simple (I Cor.1 & 2).
  - Last weekend in Acts 17 we saw Paul dealing with the intellectual elite of the world, and he took a verbal beating from them. As a result, when he came to Corinth he came in “weakness with great fear and trembling” (I Cor.2:3). But that experience drove home the point for Paul that he must never mix worldly wisdom with the gospel. That is why he said when he came to Corinth he “refused to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (I Cor.2:2).
- To be thankful in all circumstances (I Thess.5:18)
  - William Barclay suggests, “No doubt Paul was thinking of all God’s goodness to him in Corinth and took this vow to show his gratitude.” Refer to vv.9-10.
- To endure any suffering that lay ahead
  - Refer again to Acts 18:9-10; Paul is leaving Corinth, a place where he has had no harm come to him in a year and a half, and he is headed to the city that has killed more of God's people than any other city in the world, Jerusalem (Matt.23:37). He perhaps consecrated himself as a result of his desire to endure whatever trials awaited him once he left Corinth. See Acts 20:22-23; 21:10-14.
- To remain sexually pure.
  - Corinth was an extremely immoral city (See I Cor.6:9-11); Paul wrote Romans while in Corinth, and chapter one of that book is undoubtedly a description of the kind of depravity that was there. Perhaps the intense worldliness of Corinth made Paul want to express his dedication and separation unto the Lord more than ever.
- He simply did not want to be an “average Christian.”

- Saul of Tarsus was not a man satisfied with being average for God. Even before he came to know Christ, he was not satisfied with **average** (see Phil.3:4-6; Gal.1:14).

So those are some possible reasons behind Paul's vow here. But let's make the passage personal for us. Since the text does not tell us the reason behind this vow, we can fill in the blank.

Anybody ever made a vow and up to right now you've kept it? I immediately thought of two that I'm very thankful I've kept up to this point, and desire to keep until I see Jesus.

- Marriage
  - For a Christian the vows exchanged in a wedding ceremony are to your spouse, but they are also to the Lord, because to keep those vows means you will be living out the Lord's commands & guidelines concerning the marriage relationship.
  - "Vows made at a flower lined altar are only as good as those made at the altars of everyday life" (show framed quote?).
  - I can stand before you and say that I have been faithful to my wife, and this message caused me to make a fresh commitment to the Lord, as well as to my wife, to remain faithful, until death do us part.
- Ministry
  - Milton Frazier's encouragement to me to go where God calls you and stay there until that ministry is done, through thick and thin. For 32 years I have kept that commitment.
  - II Tim.4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Anybody ever made a vow that you did not keep?

- Peter
  - Even if all fall away, I will die with you!
  - See Psalm 119:9-11

Vows that every Christian should make to the Lord:

- There are many I could talk about: Fellowship, serving, communion, prayer, praise & worship, developing self-control, fasting, etc. But there are three I feel compelled to present for your consideration:
- Sexual purity
  - I Tim.5:1-2...Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, **with absolute purity**.
  - I Thess.4:3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality.
  - Eph.5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.
- Tithing
  - Not OT or NT but biblical (Gen.14; Heb.7; see Gen.28:20-22; Mal.3:8-10).
  - Prov.3:9 Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your increase.

- II Chron.31:5...the Israelites generously gave the firstfruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything.
  - Luke 16:11 If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches.
  - Matt.6:19-20...store up for yourselves treasures in heaven
  - Luke 6:38 Give and it will be given unto you
  - II Cor 9:11 You will be made rich in every way
  - Give to the Lord through the church (I Cor.9:13-14; I Tim.5:17; 5:9ff).
- Developing & maintaining a regular devotional time with the Lord
    - Mention resource "Spending Time With God"
    - Psalm 119, love for the Word; John 17:17

## CONCLUSION

- Eccl.5:4-5 When you make a vow to God, do not delay to fulfill it...It is better not to make a vow than to make one and not fulfill it.
  - See Luke 14:25-33
- There is one vow I originally had in the list of possible reasons behind Paul's vow, and I moved it to the conclusion of this message, because if we make this vow, it paves the way for the fulfillment of any vow we might make to the Lord. We find it in Romans chapter 12.
- Rom.12:1 Therefore I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God this is your true and proper worship.
  - Perhaps Paul thought back to his salvation experience, and was freshly overwhelmed at God's amazing grace toward him (See I Tim.1:12-17).