

Pastoral Paul

Reading: Acts 20:17-38 *From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents.*

Introduction

A person is said to have a pastoral heart because they have a love and compassion for people. Some people believe that it's the Pastor job to love and have compassion for people. The Bible teaches **all** Christian believers to be kind and to love people not just the pastor.

What is pastoral ministry? To understand this we must begin with God, who repeatedly describes Himself as the **Shepherd** of His people. In the Bible God's pastoral ministry is always about saving or redeeming His people. When He described His rescue from slavery in Egypt, Psalm 78:25 *But he brought his people out like a flock; he led them like sheep through the wilderness.* In Psalm 23 David described God as his Shepherd leading him through life and death.

God's pastoral ministry is redeeming people from the

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kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His Son. In the OT God repeatedly appointed people into the pastoral ministry in Israel but they repeatedly failed him on two counts. First, they were selfish rather than serving others, and second they did not proclaim God's Word but their own words. God pronounced judgement on them.

Jesus arrived as The Good Shepherd. He served the sheep rather than himself. John 10:14-16 *I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep.¹⁶ I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.* People in Jesus' flock are known by Him, saved by Him and united by Him.

Jesus taught the Word of God. Mark 6:34 *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.*

Jesus is the compassionate and guiding Pastor that everyone needs. But now in heaven He has entrusted His flock to earthly pastors, through whom he continues to pastor His flock. The primary aim of pastors is to bring

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the people to The Good Shepherd for His saving pastoral care.

Bit like a sheep dog: To round up the scattered sheep and bring them to the sheep pen for The Good Shepherd. The sheep dog doesn't gather the sheep for himself but for The Good Shepherd. The role of the pastor is to gather the sheep together for His protection and guidance week by week.

Nowhere is this better described than by the Apostle Paul to the leaders of the church whom he commanded be shepherds of the church of God. ²⁸ *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

Paul taught pastoral ministry as a gospel-teaching ministry. Some people assume that a congregation is like a football crowd who gather to watch and cheer on expensive stars demonstrating their skills on a pitch – so God's people gather to listen the pastor to entertain them. **But** the congregation are the players witnessing to the world. The pastor is like the coach who work behind the scenes preparing the team to play. Pastoral ministry is Bible Teaching that brings a congregation to salvation

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and equips them for service.

We teach repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. Acts 20:20-21 *You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.*

Paul taught that the only message that saves is about our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Christ – the promised Saviour and Lord of all. He is the coming King and He will return to judge the living and the dead.

People need to hear the gospel facts so that they can be saved. Repentance from sin is to be willing to change the things we are doing, turning from our wicked ways and surrendering to the rule of Jesus Christ in our lives.

Turning from sin involves faith in relying on Jesus Christ for salvation instead of ourselves. The whole of our Christian life is marked by continual repentance and faith as we bring all areas of our lives under His rule. The common cause of personal misery is sin. The remedy to selfishness, pride, envy, lust, dishonesty and anger is **repentance and trust in the forgiveness and power of the Lord Jesus.**

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Teach the gospel of God's Grace. Acts 20:22-24 *And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there.* ²³ *I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.* ²⁴ *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace.* Paul did not live for the approval of people. God's approval meant everything for him. Pastor's and church leaders do not live for the approval of others but for Christ's approval.

We teach God's grace. God's grace is His undeserved kindness and generosity towards us. The gospel of grace teaches that Jesus came as an ordinary man to swap places with ordinary people like us. **Jesus volunteered to be treated like us so that we can be treated like Him.** As our representative He suffered the punishment for our sin on the cross so that we can be blessed with the benefits of His obedience. He died our death and has given us His life. **Grace is God's loving gift of salvation in Christ by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.** It's not about our effort but it's all about God's amazing grace. The gospel of grace declares that

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we are precious to God, totally pardoned and certain of heaven.

Teach the Kingdom of God. God created a paradise kingdom in which His people, Adam and Eve enjoyed His blessings in His beautiful creation. When they rebelled they were expelled from the Kingdom of God, the human race was condemned with them to live and die outside of God's kingdom, in need of a saviour. But because of God's grace He promised a renewed kingdom in which God's people would once more enjoy God's blessing.

Jesus opened His Kingdom to sinners by His death and resurrection. All who surrender to King Jesus become citizen's of this kingdom and await his return. When He returns myriads of people will enjoy the blessing of being with the King of Kings and Lord or Lords. Our lives and relationships are beset with sin, suffering and sickness because the king has not yet returned. But one day! What a glorious day!

Acts 20: 26-27 **Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you.** ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

Paul never turned away from teaching unpopular or

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difficult parts of Scripture. He used OT scripture to teach us to be accountable for our lives as well as giving us an understanding of the character of Christ. We need a balanced spiritual diet of scripture and this is a pastor's priority for pastoral ministry. To teach the whole Word of God.

The elders would have immediately understood what Paul was saying in reference to Ezekiel 33 *I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you.* The Lord had told the prophet that if he failed to warn the people of the coming judgment he would be held accountable for the deaths of the people he failed to warn. They knew he was urging them not to avoid people of the coming judgment.

In revivals preaching has often been characterized by a passion for Christ and the truth about the coming judgment.

Acts 20:28-31²⁸ *Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.* ²⁹ *I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.* ³⁰ *Even from your own number men will arise*

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and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

Pastors must not selfishly look after themselves but serve the flock and they must protect the sheep from those who would exploit or hurt them. False teaching damages Christians and tears churches apart - people's lives are devastated. False teaching does not openly deny the truth but distorts and twists the truth. People try to reinterpret scripture to make it more convenient. Three years Paul never stopped warning the church with tears. Paul was a pastor who cared for the sheep. Later in the book of Revelation the Lord commended the Church for resisting false teaching BUT condemns them for losing their first love. It is certainly possible to become so committed to rooting out false teaching that our love for Christ is neglected.

Paul knew that church growth was dependent upon God who grows His church through His Word.

Acts 20:32 *Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.* Paul

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had trained the church to read the Bible them selves. He could now leave them knowing that God would continue to build the church.

Acts 20:33 *I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.* ³⁴ *You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.* ³⁵ *In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: It is more blessed to give than to receive.* Paul warned the church against material wealth on earth, to have a simple lifestyle and a generous spirit, so must pastors do the same today.

Pastoral ministry is to teach the gospel, guard the church and give the whole Word.

Personal Study Questions on Paul

- ✚ Is this your understanding of Pastoral Ministry?
- ✚ Do you talk about repentance and faith for salvation?
- ✚ How can the church guard against false teaching?