



CAPITOL COMMISSION

LABORS OF A TRUE LEADER

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A leader's manner of life gives credence to his message. In the Christian life we cannot ignore this important personal character trait—integrity. Integrity can be seen in the motives, means, and methods we use to accomplish God's work. Paul's character was above reproach, and this was a visible witness as he sought to proclaim the unadulterated gospel. In doing so, integrity propelled his ministry.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.

Paul's critics had dogged his steps and sought to discredit his ministry. That's the purpose of 2 Corinthians where Paul is forced to defend his ministry, albeit he does not want to. The missionary team had left an indelible mark on the church at Thessalonica. They imparted the gospel with an impeccable life to back it up (1:5; 2:1, 2, 5, 11; 4:2) and yet, the false accusers had sought to infiltrate the church and discredit the ministry of the missionary team.

Paul begins First Thessalonians 2, by reminding his readers of the entrance he and the missionary team had into the church "for you yourselves know, brethren." Having lived with his audience for several weeks, at least three Sabbaths (Acts 17), Paul tenderly cared for them as a mother (2:7) and as a father (2:11). They also conducted their lives in an exemplary manner while laboring among them, so as not to become a burden (2:9).

But nonetheless, every leader will encounter, at one time or another, opposition at every level. The question remains, will the quality of your life give credence to your message? Or will the things you say nullify your works?

A LEADER SUFFERS

The Missionary team has suffered greatly at the hands of the Philippians:

Acts 16 22-23 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

In this case the magistrates did not inquire of the charges, allow for a judicial hearing, or even allow for Paul and Silas to refute the accusations. As a Roman citizen this beating was illegal, not to mention judicial punishment without being convicted. Paul endured these false allegations while looking beyond the immediate pain and suffering.

Acts 16:24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

This suffering and incarceration placed Paul & Silas in the inner prison. This treatment would cause the legs to cramp up while being spread as far as humanly possible.

We don't know this type of suffering. How strong would your faith be if you were to encounter this type of persecution? Would you compromise your faith? Remember Paul endured it. Christ, who for the joy set before Him, endured the suffering of the cross.

A LEADER IS MISTREATED

A leader may need to deal with mistreatment. Although this was physical, how do you respond when you're looked over for a committee assignment; or when you are "done wrong" for not "toeing" the party line? Lest I forget to remind you, Jesus Christ did not "toe the party line." And what happened to Him?

Acts 16:20-21 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAYS @ 8:30 A.M., ROOM 317 BLATT BUILDING

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Paul and Silas were harshly treated in Philippi before making the journey to Thessalonica. “Mistreated” means “to abuse, to treat shamefully.” The word expresses insulting and outrageous treatment and especially treatment, which is calculated publicly to insult and openly to humiliate.¹ Yet given all they had encountered it was their mindset to impart the gospel and live a life of impeccable character no matter the circumstances. How will you hold up under the political mistreatment dealt to you by your own party?

A LEADER FACES MUCH OPPOSITION

As a result of their mistreatment, they had boldness not in self, but boldness in God to speak the gospel in the midst of dire circumstances. Do hardships cause depression or excitement? God, through divine providence allows difficulties and hardships to purify the believer.

When circumstances cause you to become self-absorbed, then the possibility of depression and the “woe is me” syndrome sets in. This is the wrong attitude focused upon self. You at this point neglect to fully understand the will and plan of God and that He is using this negative event to purify you and make you more like Christ.

Their opposition was excessive. It was “much” opposition, more than they humanely deserved and not unlike their treatment in Philippi. They were falsely accused of treason and physical intimidation. Acts 17:5-7

Acts 17:5-7 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, These men who have upset the world have come here also; and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.

A LEADERS ATTITUDE AND RESPONSE

A leader knows his labors are not in vain. God has approved them. This means that God’s divine favor and commission rests upon him. If opposition is facing you, you must fully realize and embrace the truth that God is at work in you to work “His will and His good pleasure” in this immediate circumstance.

A true leader relies wholeheartedly on God no matter life’s difficulties. His toil and labor is not in vain because the leader is striving to please God in all he seeks and accomplishes and never for the accolades of man.

A leader also knows his labors and trials produce boldness. He has the boldness and approval of God for he realizes that God will examine the heart. The inner motivation is this; that an examination day is forthcoming.

God is able to judge the “thought and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

In order to maintain boldness and confidence, you must be fully resolved that God is in the circumstances of your life. Within these 4 verses “God” is mentioned four times: boldness in God, gospel of God, approved by God, and God who examines the heart.

A faithful and bold leader must order his life to please God alone. A leader may be tempted to compromise the message or alter the theme to win others. However God will not bless leaders who seek to circumvent His divine mandate with deceit or error. Paul’s message, motive, and means were at all times seeking to please God who had commissioned and empowered him into ministry.

How faithful are you in the Deacon Leadership responsibilities God has entrusted to you? Are you faithful to Him or are you seeking to please men? Do you possess biblical boldness for the task at hand?

SOUTH CAROLINA

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¹ Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, edited by Cleon L. Rogers, Regency, Grand Rapids, p. 588.