

The Faithful Church: A NT Philosophy of Ministry (Acts 20)

When I graduated from the Master's College we sang "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and as the audience of 3,000+ sang out the chorus, I got the first couple words out and was overcome with tears at the overwhelming faithfulness of God in my life. I couldn't hardly get the words out, but I truly worshipped from the heart.

That's the appropriate response in all of our hearts on this very special Lord's Day where we celebrate the 30th anniversary of this church, not celebrating our faithfulness or our greatness, but to say to God "Great is Thy Faithfulness!" To say like Psalm 115:1 (NIV) *Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.*

I want to ask you to turn to Acts chapter 20, where we'll take a little break from our study in James, to study what it looks like when God's faithful love enables a church to be faithful, for the sake of the glory of the Lord's great name. God gets all the glory, but a church has an important responsibility/stewardship. Salvation is a work of God alone, but sanctification involves our effort and cooperation with what God desires and is doing. Paul said in 2 Cor. 4:2: *"it is required of stewards that one be found faithful."*

Acts 20 shows us the marks of a faithful church, not a perfect one (no such thing), but a church that is faithful to its stewardship. Acts 20 show what that New Testament church should be like, what we should want this church to be like this day and for the next 30 years and more, not gauging success the way the world does but the way God does. God's definition of success = faithfulness. It's not about us, it's all about Christ; we're just the stewards. And if we stray from His instructions, His blessing will move elsewhere.

Is it right to look back and celebrate God's blessings? Yes. God's people are commanded to recount what God had done in the past through the people of God, and even to think of milestones of what God has done in the past, which should encourage our hearts in the present. And Paul also looked to the future, pressing on to be more like Christ. And he didn't forget when and how a church founded.

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

Now there's an interesting note here that none of the writers I've read commented on, but Paul wants to be back in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. Now what do we know about the day of Pentecost from earlier in the book of Acts? Chapter 2 records this was the day the church was born and the very place it was born was in fact in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (30-33 AD?).

Pentecost on the Jewish calendar always fell on the day after the Sabbath, the first day of the week, what we call Sunday, or "the Lord's Day." What's interesting is that based on the chronology of the book of Acts, this Pentecost-Sunday that Paul wanted to make it back to Jerusalem in time for in this verse may have been the 25th-30th anniversary of the Jerusalem Church's founding Sunday. Paul wanted so much to be back in Jerusalem on that day that this verse says he decided in order to make it on time that he wouldn't stop in Ephesus to see the beloved church that he had spent 3 fruitful years of ministry investing in (as v. 31 says he was there 3 years). This very month also marks the 3-year anniversary of my coming here to this beloved church, which is just the beginning of what I hope will be 3 or 4 *decades* more here to come.

But on this Sunday that marks this church's 30-year anniversary, it's a privilege to look at this great passage of Scripture together. I pray I will be able to stand here another 30+ years from now and that the principles from this passage would then and now be what mark our ministry. Wherever we fall short of this passage, may God refine and reform us today and in the future for His great namesake. Will you please stand with me in reverence for God's unchanging and Holy Word as I read beginning in Acts 20, v. 17:

¹⁷From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²"And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

²⁴“But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so 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. ²⁵“And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. ²⁶“Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. ²⁷“For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. ²⁸“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. ³²“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.

1. Pre-Eminence of God and His Word (v. 1-7)

It's in vs. 1-6 that Paul wrote 2 letters of God's Word (Rom/2Cor). The primacy of God's Word stands out from the beginning of this chapter, where we see Paul exhorting from God's Word wherever he goes: ¹After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had **exhorted them** and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those districts and had **given them much exhortation** [slightly different phrase than v. 1, encouraging with the word (*logos*) or “with many words,” perhaps applying God's truth] he came to Greece ...

⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began **talking to them [KJV “preached”]**, intending to leave the next day, and **he prolonged his message [logos] until midnight.**

These verses don't record exactly what he said to the believers, but based on what he says that we already read when he exhorts the Ephesians elders in verses 19-28, the Pre-eminence of God stands out in the words that come out of Paul's mouth, as I'm sure they did with anyone he spoke to. Paul refers to God the Father, Son, or Spirit 13x in those 9 verses. For Paul, it was all about God, and all he had to say revolved around God pre-eminently. Everything in life must bow to the supremacy of God, and a high view of God and His Word must always be pre-eminent in a faithful ministry.

We get some insight into this God-centered emphasis in Paul's actual recorded teaching in Acts 17:24-25: *"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things ..."*

If you want a good definition of "pre-eminent" – that sums it up. God doesn't need you, Paul says, you need God! God doesn't exist for your sake, you exist and live and move and have your being by His grace and for His glory! God doesn't need you to give Him anything, but you desperately need Him for anything! God is God. He is Lord. He is Sovereign and He is supreme, pre-eminently praiseworthy and to be prized far above all. Everything in life must be aimed to the magnificent and matchless Name of the massive mighty God around which everything must revolve. As one poet put it, God is "incomparable, unconquerable, all powerful, unstoppable ... with Him it's impossible to exaggerate ... every sphere in life He's the Lord of it, every other power is either fraudulent or subordinate ... all His adversaries are imaginary!" To put it simply, God is God, and you are not, brother (or sister)!

In Nov. 2006, I said in my first sermon here as pastor something I still believe with all my heart and pray this church will always pursue with all its heart: The great and pressing need of the hour is to have a high view of God and a high view of God's Word.

A. W. Tozer said what we really believe and act like we believe about God is the most important thing about us, and that applies to individuals and churches. If we do not reverence God as we ought, we will not reverence what He has to say in His Word as we ought.

In the words of Steve Lawson yet again: 'As our view of God has suffered, so have our ministries and lives. Rather than being focused upon the true God, [too many churches] have become enamored with the world, a vantage point that easily accommodates our vision of a god made in our image. The sad result is this: Rather than seeking to become as much like heaven as they can be, churches are instead striving to become like the world. Rather than pursuing spirituality and substance, many have become enamored with style and size. The sizzle – not the steak – has become the main entrée.

[The light of the gospel has been replaced with a “lite” gospel that tastes great but is less filling, and commercial-driven marketing churches are replacing] preaching with performance, exposition with entertainment, sound doctrine with sound checks ... and the unfolding drama of redemption with – well, just plain drama.

Only when our vision of God is restored will our lives and ministries be put right. A high view of God leads us to see that the church is not a corporation, but a congregation; not a business, but a body; not a factory, but a family ... a right vision of God must be the driving force behind the church. Only that can bring His glorious presence and all-sufficient power to bear on the lives of His people so that we can be what He desires us to be.’¹

Acts 20:32 sums up the way God’s people are sanctified, the way we grow to be more of what God desires and requires us to be:

*“And now I commend you **to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up...**”* [there’s the pre-eminence of God and His Word in one phrase – “to God and to the Word”]

The supremacy of God and the sufficiency of God’s Word are the twin pillars that hold up the NT Philosophy of Ministry in Acts 20. God mediates His grace which grows us through His Word (v. 32 calls it *“the word of His grace, which is able to build you up”*). This is the biblical church-growth strategy, more of God and more of His Word. The tragedy is that so many who want to grow churches today are trying to do so with less of the Word truly and fully preached and with less of God and more of man and man’s little world at the center with everything revolving around us.

- I say that’s a tragedy because as I also said in our first series together as a church, anything that does not have God and His Word as its power source, anything else from the world, cannot have abiding lasting life-changing power
- Nothing I say or can come up with is living and powerful and can cut to the heart and soul. My words aren’t sharper than any two-edged sword, but all that’s in God’s Word is.
- Nothing man can come up with is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be equipped, thoroughly furnished for every good work, but all Scripture has that and does that.
- Only the Word can light our feet and be a lamp to our path.
- Only the Bible can cause people to be born again and totally transformed from the inside-out as a new creation
- Only this book is truly and fully sufficient for all of life

When we don't really believe that, and try to use plastic utensils instead of the Sword of the Spirit, or pre-fabricated substitutes or personal improvements or politics or pop culture to "enhance" our message, the result is as Criswell already described years ago:

'When a man goes to church he often hears a preacher in the pulpit rehash everything that he has read in the editorials, the newspapers, and the magazines. On the TV commentaries he hears that same stuff over again, yawns, and goes out and plays golf on Sunday. When a man comes to church [intentionally choosing to be where the Bible is really taught], actually what he is saying to you is this, 'Preacher, I know what the TV commentator has to say; I hear him every day. I know what the editorial writer has to say; I read it every day. I know what the magazines have to say; I read them every week. Preacher, what I want to know is, does God have anything to say? If God has anything to say, tell us what it is.'²

That's where faithful ministry starts, with the recognition that a Supreme and Sovereign God has spoken and He has spoken to us in the Scriptures. That's why there must always be a pre-eminence placed on God and His Word. May we always be faithful to this!

2. Priority of the Lord's Day and the Lord's People (v. 7-16)

There are not many places in the NT where we get a glimpse into what the Lord's people did on the Lord's Day in a church service (this is the only narrative passage I'm aware of). Here's a snapshot:

⁷*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.* ⁸*There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered ...*

If you go back to the end of v. 6, the text says Paul came into town and stayed seven days, and then it says it was on the first day of the week they all gathered together to *break bread* (a phrase used for the Lord's table / communion), and Paul left the next day (Monday on a modern calendar). So he intentionally stayed through the day the church gathered, and celebrated the Lord's Supper together and Paul shared an extended message with them. This gives insight that it was a regular pattern for churches to gather on this day for worship and that's why Paul stayed through a weekend to be able to be with the gathered body (I'm sure he saw others in the week).

The book of Acts uses the word Sabbath consistently for the seventh day of the week (Saturday on our calendar) the Jewish day of rest, God's sign of His covenant with Moses, while Christians prioritized the first day of the week (Sunday on our calendar) to worship (no early church or NT evidence any called it the Sabbath; what made Sunday important was it's the day the Lord Jesus rose).

**Also Christ's resurrection appearances, day church born*

The Apostle John when He was away from the Lord's people on the isle of Patmos still spoke of "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10) as a day he was worshipping in spirit, even though his body was exiled. Ignatius, who was personally disciplined by John and wrote within a decade of Revelation, explains how the day was understood: "[We] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day."³

The early church father Justin Martyr, writing within a century of the book of Acts, wrote in his *Apology* (Chapter 67): "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits . . ."

(in v. 7 they weren't too worried about the time!)

History indicates that Sunday was a normal working day in the Roman Empire for common people and the picture in Acts 20 of an evening service after a workday fits what we know from history. In the 4th century, the Roman Empire allowed more Christians to take the daytime off work for religious reasons, but a Sunday evening service appears to be the priority of the early church for centuries, though it is not that way in many modern churches. There does appear to have been a tradition that developed later of Christians meeting early *in the morning as well* on the Lord's Day (and there's nothing wrong with that tradition of also having a morning service, the early church loved any chance to gather; see Acts 2). For those who could, it was a blessing to gather more than once a week. You won't detect anywhere in the NT or the early church writings a mindset that they were glad to get a little time with the Lord out of the way so they could have "more time for me" – that may be an American mindset but it's not from the Bible (like the *LA Times* commercials about the Sunday paper, "this is *my* day").

The day was called "Sunday" by the Romans, but the Christians called it the "Lord's Day" because it was the Day the Lord rose from the grave, and every Sunday thus celebrated the resurrection. The Lord's Day was a priority for the life of the Lord's people.

Is the Lord's Day a priority for you and your family to be with the Lord's people? Is the importance of the Lord's Day and your kids worshipping with God's people something you model to them? Do we affirm by our actions the importance of hearing the Word?

From earliest times in Israel, families were to practice this pattern: Deuteronomy 31 (NKJV) ¹¹ *when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.* ¹² *Gather the people together, men and women **and little ones**, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and **that they may learn to fear the LORD your God** and carefully observe all the words of this law,* ¹³ *and that their children, who have not known it, **may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God** as long as you live ...*

How are our kids going to learn to fear the Lord our God if they don't see it modeled in us in the hearing of God's Holy Word? I can't expect my kids to have a high view of what I do not. Has the need of this text changed in our day? If anything, we need it more. Do you come to church to go home? Do you count it a privilege if you're able to be with Christians more than just 1 time a week (evening service and/or more during the week)? Do you even think of it as "the Lord's Day"? I am concerned that many have a low view of the Lord's Day and the Lord's people and why it's important for their spiritual growth, regular spiritual interaction.

The Didache (not in NT but early church writing, ca. 100 A.D.): 'every Lord's day gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one who is at odds [or quarrel] with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned [or polluted].'⁴

That expression for breaking bread in v. 7 of Acts 20 was a term for the Lord's table (the bread and the cup) and often in the NT it occurred in conjunction with an evening meal, although it was not identical to the meal (read context of 1 Cor. 11). Acts 20:11 says: *When he had gone back up and **had broken the bread and eaten**, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left.*

"Talked" is a different word than v. 7, a less formal word than the preaching Paul did earlier that night. In v. 11 it's more a word that means to converse with, to interact, what we might call fellowship.

The biblical concept of fellowship is not just hanging out making small talk, it means to share together spiritual things, it's especially spiritual conversations, talking about the things of the Lord. You don't have to be super close with someone to do this; just choose to ask questions about spiritual things (why not do this tonight with whoever's at your table, talk about their testimony if you don't know it or what God is doing in their life, or in yours, etc.).

Acts 2 (NASB95) ⁴² *They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer ...* ⁴⁶ *Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,*

The early church did this almost every day for awhile -- surely it's not too radical for us to start with 1 day a week making these sort of things more a priority. Next Lord's Day I'll be starting a new series on Ruth, great place to jump in. In Acts 2 it wasn't just in the temple (bigger gatherings of 3,000+?) but it says from house to house they took meals together during the week. It doesn't say the apostles were coordinating this as a program, but the Lord's people were spontaneously a natural priority for NT churches, not just on the Lord's Day but as a lifestyle of hospitality and fellowship. For tonight we're hoping to try and practice some of the things we see in this chapter more ... prayer, celebrating the Lord's Table in conjunction with a common meal together, and having some fellowship together, and listening to this church's beloved founding Pastor Dale talk (we should be done before midnight! :)

If you can do it *today*, why not make it more of a lifestyle: the priority of the Lord's Day and the priority of the Lord's people? A happy people like Acts 2, a healthy fellowship, a faithful church is marked by this along with the pre-eminence of God and His Word.

3. Pattern of Humility in Service with Self-Sacrifice (v. 17-19)

Acts 20 (NASB95) ¹⁶ *For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.* ¹⁷ *From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.* ¹⁸ *And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,* ¹⁹ *servicing the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me ...*

In v. 18b it says *“I was with you the whole time ...”*

In v. 20b it says *“publicly and from house to house”*

In other words, ministry is not limited to the Lord’s Day; it is a life of service, a way of life for all of life. And by the way, using your house for service is a ministry as much as anything else. The NT word translated “ministry” is used of ladies like Martha who welcomed Jesus into her home and served Him, ministered to Him by her hospitality. How you serve your spouse and your children and shepherd and disciple your children and how you use your home to be hospitable to others is not only a ministry, biblically speaking, it’s to be a Christ-centered God-glorifying one. We lift the Lord up more as we lower ourselves more in our attitude and actions, humbly serving others as more important than ourselves.

The word for “serving” in v. 19 comes from the root word *doulos*. It’s the verb form for serving as a slave, a lowly slave to a master. Jesus taught his disciples they should always have the attitude of a lowly servant / slave. Luke 17:10: *“So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”*

If you really have that attitude, you’re not going to get all bent out of shape about how you feel treated, or what you deserve or want in the church or life; we’re just unworthy slaves privileged to serve

When Paul says in Acts 20:19 he was “serving the Lord” (like a slave serving a master) that would be enough to make clear the attitude we must have in ministry and serving others. But he takes it a step further with the modifying phrase “with all humility.”

Humble servants are at the heart of any faithful church. And even the greatest church or ministry or movement of God can become messed up more quickly by a lack of humility than just about anything else. Jonathan Edwards called pride “the greatest disturber of the soul’s peace and sweet communion with Christ,” and he believed spiritual pride was the greatest cause of the premature ending of the Great Awakening, the greatest revival this continent has seen. C. J. Mahaney explained this dynamic for our any day: ‘Pride also undermines unity and can ultimately divide a church. Show me a church where there’s division, where there’s quarreling, and I’ll show you a church where there’s pride. Pride also brings down leaders ... and churches more than anything.’⁵

When I began ministry here, I was struck in reading Josh Harris's foreword to C. J. Mahaney's excellent book on humility: 'For me, the best example of this kind of humility is the fact that, after 27 years of serving as senior pastor of Covenant Life Church, he chose to pass this role on to me. I'm only thirty [as someone who was 31 in a similar position then, and Pastor Dale had also humbly served exactly 27 years as senior pastor here; this got my attention as Josh went on to write words much like my experience here!] ... 'he trained me and mentored me, then joyfully allowed me to step into his place. Most young pastors have to start their own church to get the chance to lead so soon, since few older men are willing to give up or share a position of leadership. C J. was not only willing to make this transition but planned it for years so that I'd be positioned for success.'⁶

If you've been here for years, I don't have to tell you that Pastor Dale and his humility was much the same way and much like the Apostle Paul. May we follow him as he followed Christ, humbly serving others faithfully for the glory of a God who has used that attitude in Dale and others to help this church be faithful to God. Paul adds 2 more words in v. 19: *serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me ...*

Paul could sing the words of our hymn "I love thy church O Lord"

For her [the church] my tears shall fall, For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given Till toils and cares shall end.

If you serve others and seek to minister to others, there will be trials and even tears at times, even from your own people as Paul experienced from his own people, the Jews. But no disciple of Jesus is exempt from serving others and no disciple is promised a life free of trouble – Jesus said, "*In this world you will have trouble, but take heart, I have overcome the world.*"

Difficulty in ministry doesn't mean it's time to throw in the towel, it means you're really in the ministry, you're in the fight, you're in the race – you can't do either without sweat or pain. Fight the fight, Paul would say, finish your course, complete your race. The language of a fight or a marathon isn't an image of relaxation or comfort – where does anyone get the idea from the Bible that to serve the Lord is about ease and what you please? If you're seeking to serve here and have difficulty with people, kids/parents, and complain to the leaders, we may say "welcome to ministry."

This is life, beloved. We can't expect to be treated better than Jesus was when He served – we're not better than Jesus are we? Jesus didn't get a lot of thanks and kudos for His sacrificial loving service, but He wasn't in it for that, because it wasn't about Him, it was about the glory of God. Jesus Himself came taking the form of a lowly bond-servant (literally a slave). He came not to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many sinners.

It's encouraging to me that Paul was someone who practiced what he preached in Acts 20, and he wasn't calling these believers from Ephesus to do anything he had not already done among them. But what's more encouraging and more empowering is to realize the Lord who calls us to serve Himself served as the lowliest slave, as Philippians 2 said, "have this mindset in you which was also in Christ Jesus." His service enables ours by God's sustaining grace.

In v. 19, Paul says in his serving them he was actually "*serving the Lord*" which is an important aspect of your philosophy of ministry. If our service is only focused on the human being we're serving and his/her desirability or what he/she does for us, there isn't much motive to serve sacrificially and continually. But if Jesus were here, you better believe we would go to any length to serve Him.

Well, let's be reminded of what Jesus said in Matt. 25:35-40 where He says the little things we do for His children: making a meal, bringing them something that meets a need, inviting people over, visiting people in need ... Matt. 25:40 (NKJV) says "*the King will ... say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'*"

That's who Paul had in mind as he served, as he says in v. 19. And that's who all believers must have in mind as we serve, he says in Rom. 12 (NASB95) ¹⁰ *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, **serving the Lord** [same Grk phrase] ... ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.*

It was from Jesus, through Jesus, and to Jesus that he served. It didn't depend on his own natural love; the love of Christ compelled him. Paul used the same Grk word for "serve" in Gal. 5:13: "*through love serve one another.*" Without love, such service would be like a noisy gong or annoying clanging cymbal, and we could also say the same thing about service without humility.

There is more in this passage from the Apostle Paul we may look at next week but I want to close by saying that as a church or individuals we can only be faithful because the Lord is faithful. We can only love sacrificially, because He first loved us. Paul said in Galatians 2 “*Christ now lives in me ... the life I live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.*” That’s how we can love sacrificially for others – by Jesus and getting self out of the way as much as possible so He may increase.

The gospel is not just the power of God unto salvation. It’s also the power of God unto sanctification, making us more like Jesus the more we survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. If you have not come humbly before that reality for salvation, bow before Jesus, not just as a lowly servant but as a lowly sinner and confess Jesus as your Lord/Master today, which means it’s not about you anymore, it’s all about Him, He is King. Turn from your sin and trust Him and commit to serve Him by His grace and for His glory, till He says “Well done, good and faithful ... slave.”

And there are such faithful humble servants here that we can emulate and follow them as they follow Christ, like Paul could say.

We're pilgrims on the journey Of the narrow road
And those who've gone before us line the way
Cheering on the faithful, encouraging the weary
Their lives a stirring testament to God's sustaining grace
Surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses
Let us run the race not only for the prize
But as those who've gone before us Let us leave to those behind us
The heritage of faithfulness passed on through godly lives

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful

¹ Lawson, *Made in Our Image*, p. 17.

² Piper (see his first message?)

³ *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:62-63 [hereafter ANF].

⁴ Didache 14.1-2, Roberts-Donaldson translation [brackets with alternates from other translations].

⁵ C. J. Mahaney, *Humility: True Greatness*, p. 34-35.

⁶ *Humility: True Greatness*, p. 10-11.