

Where We Should Be Heading

Introduction:

1. The answer (if we have been on the right course) is that we should be heading right where we have been!
2. To answer the question properly, we must find biblical instruction that tells the people of God what they should be doing.
3. Acts 20:17-35 - Paul's instruction to the Ephesian elders:
 - a. Tells what he had done and what he plans to do.
 - b. Tells of the dangers they faced.
 - c. Tells what they should do.
 - d. Tells the source for answers.
4. Same principles can and should be applied to any work in the gospel.
 - a. Local work.
 - b. Meeting work.
 - c. Writing in paper / tract / book.
 - d. Internet (e-mail / web pages).
5. See what we learn from Paul's speech about where we should be headed:

I. Serious About Service To God (vv. 18-19)

- A. *Seen in that he practiced what he preached* (v. 18).
 1. What he told Timothy (1 Timothy 4:16).
 2. If we are going to be effective, we must walk in the fear of God (Psa.33, 34).
 3. In our personal and daily lives our goal must be to be "accepted of Him" (2 Cor. 5:9).
 4. What we preach applies to us as much as it does to anyone.
- B. *Seen in his humility* (v. 19).
 1. A haughty spirit destroys our work.
 2. Should strive not to even "come across" as arrogant.
 3. Humility causes one to examine self and consider own temptations (Gal. 6:1).
 4. We are not above the law, nor are we lawmakers, we are mere messengers for the Lord.
- C. *Seen in that his work was not just a job* (vv. 19, 33ff).
 1. Tears - concern, care and interest for those he taught.

2. Not in it for money - provided for self because of his love for the Lord and the people he taught.

II. Preach The Word

- A. *Word of God - Not opinions of man* (vv. 24, 25, 27, 32).
 1. It is the word that has the power to save (Rom. 1:16-17).
 2. Other messages are condemned (Gal. 1:6-9).
 - a. Opinions.
 - b. Doctrines of men.
 - c. Jokes and story telling.
 - d. Pop psychology.
 3. Plea for unity must be upon the **word**.
 - a. United upon word (John 17).
 - b. Cause for division is that one or more are speaking contrary to the revealed word (ill: Matt. 16:13-18).
 - c. To be united - plea must be to give up opinions and doctrines of men and stand together on what we can find in book of God!
- B. *Use Every Opportunity* (v. 20).
 1. Publicly & privately.
 2. Utilize opportunities: magazine, Internet, private studies, etc.
 3. Must view these avenues as mere extensions of our influence - not places of prominence or power.
- C. *Balance* (vv. 20, 27).
 1. Profitable (v. 20).
 - a. What they needed to be saved and grow.
 - b. Not: what they want, what is pleasant, impresses others or will make him popular.
 2. Whole counsel (v. 27). That means:
 - a. No areas we refuse / afraid to address.
 - b. Not become "one issue" or "top heavy".
 - c. Deal with controversial and non-controversial topics.
 - d. Reprove and rebuke when and where it is needed.
 - e. We encourage, inform and build faith as well as reprove. (We don't have to be blistering brutes all the time to be preaching the truth!).
- D. *Build up* (v. 32).
 1. Steady diet of what we preach / write should build up, increase faith and make people stronger.

2. It is the *word* that builds!

III. Endure The Opposition & Heat (vv. 19, 22-24)

- A. *Soldiers have to endure hardships* (2 Tim. 2:3).
- B. *Preaching the truth stirs opposition* (vv. 19, 22-ff).
 1. Don't be surprised when you or some fellow laborer is labeled as one who troubles Israel (1 Kings 18:17)!
 2. When we preach / write we open the door for critique and outright opposition.
- C. *Keep on* (v. 24).
 1. Paul pressed on in spite of opposition. He didn't even regard his own life.
 2. The answer (when the message is not well received) is keep preaching the same message!

IV. Develop and Maintain Effective Leadership (vv. 28-ff)

- A. *Elders' Work:*
 1. Watch - watch for souls & dangers they face (Heb. 13:17).
 2. Oversee - lead.
 3. Feed - see that the flock receives the proper diet, and are warned and protected (cf. Tit. 1).
- B. *A Church with qualified elders:*
 1. Will stay on right course.
 2. Will be duly warned of potential dangers.
 3. Will be taught in the word.
- C. *What can we do?* Our work helps:
 1. Develop leadership.
 2. Stress role, purpose and need for elders.

V. Watch & Warn (vv. 29-31)

- A. *Watch* (v. 31).
 1. Means: keep awake, be alert (Strong's). Same word as vigilant in 1 Peter 5:8.
 2. For what?
 - a. Departures (vv. 29-30).
 - b. Teaching that will lead astray (vv. 29-30).

- B. *Warn* (v. 31).
 - 1. Of what?
 - a. Departures (vv. 29-30).
 - b. Teaching that will lead astray (vv. 29-30).
 - 2. Why? The people of God are in danger of being lead astray.

Conclusion: *We need to be headed in the direction that we will:*

- 1. Be serious about our service - (Fear God, be humble, and truly care about the work of the Lord).
- 2. Preach the word:
 - a. Only what you can put your finger on and no more.
 - b. Use every opportunity.
 - c. Be balanced.
 - d. Strive to build up those who hear.
- 3. Face opposition and keep pressing on.
- 4. Develop & Maintain effective leadership.
- 5. Watch for danger and warn of it.

- Outline by: *Donnie V. Rader*