



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 71 “Not Being Precious unto Ourselves”**  
**By Pastor Jody May 03/17/2024**

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**Acts 20:22-24 ESV**

<sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, <sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”**  
**People – “Thanks be to God.”**

**[PRAY]**

**[ILLUSTRATION]**

One wouldn't have to go too far to find examples of stories of people who sacrificed risking their lives in order to save those that can't save themselves, there everywhere. You can think back recently to the Thailand cave rescue in 2018 where it cost a Navy Seal's life to rescue 13 soccer boys and their coach<sup>1</sup>, or the story of Jordan Rice (2011) of Australia who gave up the chance to be rescued during a flood so that his other family members would be saved<sup>2</sup>, or even recently (2023) on tv a pizza delivery guy, Nick Bostic, ran into a burning house to save a family from a fire<sup>3</sup>. All are examples of bravado that would be hard for any of us to match, although I think that many of us would display this same type of sacrificial decision making if we were put into similar situations.

That doesn't take anything away from our heroes, I am just stating that what helps us make quick decisions that are steeped in fear and danger, based in a moment's notice, is a complex neuro system backed by hormones (adrenaline) that react with our core convictions to act. For example, many of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44791998>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/weather/how-jordan-died-to-save-his-brother-20110112-19obf.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.rd.com/article/pizza-man-saves-kids-from-fire/>



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us are parents and engrained in us is child protection, to the point if we were outside and we saw a speeding car racing through our parking lot, most of us would react in some way, perhaps even putting our own lives at risk. The quicker the action, and the stronger the impulse to do something based on core beliefs along with hormonal interference, **the less amount of contrived courage you will need** to do the action.

Now what heightens a sense of sacrifice, that which requires a greater amount of courage is when the decision to act doesn't come in a moment's notice, but instead the time to respond is lengthened so that there is no lack of foresight into seeing that one's direct intervention might not end well. Would we be able to make sacrificial choices for someone else's life if we could see the outcome was bad for us and only good for others? What about this, what if the outcome is not only good for them, but they would be unthankful for it!? Maybe never knowing what it cost you to do that for them?

I am reminded this morning of a hero of our faith Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German pastor and theologian who sought to correct the theology of the Third Reich. Bonhoeffer felt the continual pressure by the Nazis to support their endeavors in the war and to accept the genocide of the Jews. He had fled Germany to America when he could no longer support the Fuhrer only to jump on another ship to return in 1939 to preach the truth under conviction of the HS. This same conviction led to his sympathizing with fellow countrymen that wanted to assassinate Hitler, which got him arrested in 1943. In April of 1945 a few days before the end of the war, Dietrich was executed out of spite, for his views against the Nazi party and for his choice of pastoring those that were under his care in the POW camps. Bonhoeffer was a man faced with a trip that only held his destruction, that got him branded as a traitor, that forced him to think of his future rewards in Christ in the heavens, for there was no immediate reward for him on earth.<sup>4</sup>

We are catching up with Paul today, and I believe this is the conundrum of what he is up against. Paul has seen his future, sort of speaking, and in chapter 19:21 he has seen that his future path will take him through Jerusalem and then back to Rome.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/dietrich-bonhoeffer>



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**Acts 19:21 ESV**

<sup>21</sup>Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

*After these events (19:21), that is after seeing the success of Corinthian church in the capital of Achaia, and now seeing Ephesus retake Asia as the Spiritual capital for Christ, he had a mind to go to Rome. He sees that there is a path to take, to bring in the Kingdom of God, not just one providence at a time, but at a national level through the capital of the Roman Empire.*

That plan has not changed here in chapter 20 but as we read today Paul is realizing as Bonhoeffer did, this was most likely not going to bode well for him, that it would require a degree of courage and sacrifice to see it all the way through. I want us to look at v. 24 and read again what I think is the main point of view for this passage (v.22-24).

<sup>24</sup> But I do not **account** my life of any **value** nor as **precious** to myself,

Paul, considering all that had happened to him and all that will happen to him, did not consider his life to have value or that he should consider it precious unto himself. The value of his life was not determined in how he viewed it but in how he could spend it for Christ.

**MP:**

**To be able to Sacrifice for the Kingdom requires  
a diminished sense of one’s own importance.**

As people of God while we understand the value of our life, to be able to sacrifice for the really important things of God’s Kingdom, we must **continually fight against** believing that we are more important than God’s plans, that we are more important than Christ’s glory, and that our personal comfort is always primary above all. BUT if we want a life that ends well, that produces rewards in heaven, and that stands as a testimony to our loved ones



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when we are gone, then we need to learn the value of and the way of Sacrificial living.

If we don't learn how to do this, anytime we perceive something hard to do, we may back out of that which is life changing for ourselves and others. To help us learn when and how we may be called to sacrifice as Paul did, as Dietrich did, we are going to look at three different aspects of Sacrificial Living: 1<sup>st</sup> The Circumstances that lead to Sacrificial Living, 2<sup>nd</sup> The Motives that lead to Sacrificial Living, and 3<sup>rd</sup> the Privilege of Sacrificial Living.

### 1. The Circumstances that lead to Sacrificial Living

<sup>22</sup> And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, **constrained** by the **Spirit, not knowing** what will happen to me there,

There are certain conditions or prerequisites that happen in the believer's life that let you know that you may be headed to a hard decision, something that is going to cause you to lose some sleep. Notice Paul here in v.22 uses this curious phrasing, “**constrained** by the Spirit”, δέω (*deō*): in the Greek means to **bind** as in marriage or **compel with force**, in other words you don't have a choice.<sup>5</sup> Paul is sensing that there is a compulsion placed on him by which he cannot escape, a conviction. From 19:21 he thought the Spirit might be leading him and now after the riot in Ephesus and the stalking by the Jewish death cult earlier in the chapter, he now knows the Spirit is leading him. Now stop right there, how many of us upon encountering bad news, hard times, and bleak forecasts in our lives do we start believing that God probably has a plan leading us right into the middle of it?

**When the HS usually compels us forward it usually comes through the path of most resistance.** I mean, think about that, you and I usually don't need the Spirit to say, *hey look here is the easy way, here is the pleasant path, here is the*

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<sup>5</sup> **1313** δέω (*deō*): vb.; ≡ DBLHebr 673; Str 1210; TDNT 2.60–1. LN 18.13 **bind**, tie together (Mt 13:30); **2.** LN 37.114 **imprison** (Mk 15:7; Ac 9:2, 14, 21; 21:13; 22:5; 24:27); **3.** LN 37.33 **compel**, force (Ac 20:22); **4.** LN 37.45 **restrict**, put under authority of (Ro 7:2; 1Co 7:39; 2Ti 2:9); **5.** LN 37.46 **prohibit**, formally, bind (Mt 16:19; 18:18+); **6.** LN 23.157 **cause illness**, cause physical hardship (Lk 13:16+); **7.** cf. LN 34.66–34.78 δέδσαι γυναῖκί (*dedesai gynaikei*), be married, implying being under the authority of (1Co 7:27+). Swanson, J. (1997). [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.



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*road with the least amount of friction in your life, go that way.* I don't think anyone in here stops and prays hard about those type of decisions. BUT what I see Paul doing is he is stopping and now he is no longer thinking about it, he knows for sure that the HS has him going through perceived hard times. That type of decision making, that path of sacrifice, I see over and over and over in scripture for that is **the path that mirrors Christ.**

This path he's on is not just difficult but he admits he can't see for sure what will happen, *“not knowing what will happen to me there”*(v.22). It's like he knows there is appointment with danger but he's not sure what type of danger it is. I remember when I was scuba diving in the winter off the coast of FL., when the water is dark and it's only about 5-10 ft. of visibility and there is always that moment of apprehension before rolling off the back of the boat, especially if you are first. What reminded me of that is when I saw a young lady last year on a video about to dive into open water but instead stuck her head down off the back first only to jump back in the boat as a giant Tiger Shark came up to take a bite at her. **It's one thing to see the danger in front of you and another thing altogether not to know what it is.**

You see when **The Spirit asks you to jump, He rarely shows you what the danger is because He is building faith and trust in Him.** That's one of the keys to learning to live sacrificially, you have to learn how to trust on the way, so when it is time to jump family, into hard decisions, the advice is not to overthink the consequences just learn to jump and learn to trust Him. Now jumping into this journey to Jerusalem, while he was unaware of the specifics, Paul knew something of its' nature.

<sup>23</sup>except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that **imprisonment and afflictions** await me.

Ok so Paul knew through previous encounters + the increase in hostilities against Him + the fact that the devil knows his name and is probably upset with his interference in Ephesus, there is nothing but trouble ahead = more imprisonments and afflictions. But you know what else Paul knows? This is the way that Jesus beat the devil, **(thinking back 2k years ago at this time)**this was the path that Jesus walked to Jerusalem as a branded spiritual outcast by



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His own people, Jesus knew that going to Jerusalem would mean his death, and Jesus embraced His future because He would be obedient unto death, to glorify God, to set sinners free like Paul, like us.

I believe that Paul finally started seeing how his life was to be a mirror reflection of Jesus, and if he would but copy his movements, Paul could run a course he could be proud of. But the answer is not in thinking of Himself more highly than he should but to embrace that the first shall be last ([Mat 20:16](#)) and that serving Jesus would mean his degradation. Paul saw his Salvation through the path of maximum resistance, and now that he understood it, he wouldn't fight it anymore, reminding all of us:

**To be able to Sacrifice for the Kingdom requires a diminished sense of your own importance.**

Family I wonder do we think about Christ in such a way, are we looking to live as He did so that our names can be associated with His? Do we want to be known as people who rightly reflect Christ? Then let us embrace the path the HS is aligning us with, jump in, and trust Him with our futures.

## **2. The Motives to Endure Sacrificial Living**

<sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, *if only I may **finish my course** and the **ministry** that I received from the Lord Jesus,*

He makes this bold statement in v.24, again our main focus today, about how he does not consider his life of value or preciousness unto himself, then there is this transitional clause, *“if only I may”*. That means he is about to tell you what brings his life value, the only way that he sees it means anything! He has 2 goals: **He has a race to run and a ministry to finish!** Everything else Paul would tell us to put it aside that which would entangle us ([Heb 12:1](#)). His view is we are expendable to the calling that Jesus has set up for us. **The motive of Sacrificial Living comes from the understanding you have a job to do and everything else is a distraction.**

That's easy to say, it's stoic to think about, but it is so hard to do! We fill our lives with so many unnecessary things, but family let me fill you in on a secret,





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every Christian has the same life calling as Paul does, **you have a race to run and a ministry to finish, that IS your motive!** You see the danger is **NOT** to look at your life in this way, and many of us are in this danger because the **Americanized church taught us this.**

Many people in the American church believe this is their call: *Get by the best you can, having as much fun as you can, honoring the Lord when you can.* Family I got to be honest with you, that is the path to hell plain and simple. That path shows a life that loves not Christ, but loves oneself above all others, that still finds themselves as ‘precious’...

Listen to Paul’s words at the end of his life and see how serious he took this call to run and finish.

**2 Timothy 4:6-8 ESV**

<sup>6</sup>For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup>I have **fought the good fight**, I have **finished the race**, I have **kept the faith**. <sup>8</sup>Henceforth there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Paul in his last chapter he ever wrote, in his last words to Timothy as he sat in a jail cell in Rome waiting for his execution, looking over his past 9-10 years since Luke had recorded his words in Acts, here’s what he learned.

**He fought a good fight**, Christian I say this with all love, our last years should not be tied up in tales of how we spent our retirement, but they should be riddled with stories of how we loved others in the church **wearing ourselves out!** Family there is no glory wasting into eternity but there is immense value into working yourself into your grave for Jesus. Being tired after a fight it is a good thing, heck you won’t even notice what this world considers as burdensome, because all you will know is the euphoria knowing you fought well for the Lord.

**He finished the race**, Christian it is a fight to live this way especially in a culture that says go for the pursuit of happiness, which is never embracing



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your race, run from danger, and flee all manner of physical hardships. He saw the end was Rome, and he made it to that end, and if you read all of Timothy 4 everyone is gone BUT Luke. No human fanfare, no retirement parties, nothing but death staring at him and the only way he could accept that is because he came to terms with it years earlier!

This is the biggest enemy of marriage in the American church, she (the church) has embraced all the little intricacies of how to escape marriage if you are not happy. I have got news for you church, **MARRIAGE IS OUR RACE!** If you are married God's desire is for you to remain married, healthy in the relationship, and Christ honoring in your marriage till death do you part, and that will take most of your energy and commitment! Your joy comes from fulfilling Christ's high view of marriage where **He claims God hates divorce** ([Mat 19:8-9](#); [Mal 2:16](#))!

**He kept the Faith**, Christian our faith is about enduring testing in the world not bailing out when we see trouble ahead, your faith is displayed by your works ([James 2:18](#)). Keeping the Faith until the end is what needs to be accomplished by Paul and it is exactly what needs to be accomplished by us.

Family to lift up Christ in front of all the world means everything to the true believer. BUT **to be able to Sacrifice for the Kingdom requires a diminished sense of your own importance**, are you willing to fight the good fight, finish the course, and keep the faith!? Let me give you one last reason why you should want to do that.

### **3. The Privilege of Sacrificial Living**

*<sup>24</sup> But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may - to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.*

We live sacrificially BECAUSE we testify/witness to the Gospel/good news of the GRACE of God.

What is this GRACE? Paul talks a lot about Grace when he connects it to a person, and almost every time you will see this connection in his letters. Let me just give you one verse that lays it out succinctly.





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**Romans 3:24 ESV**

<sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Paul says Grace is simply the Redemption from this world in Jesus Christ, and that was namely by the process of Justification. Paul's had a strong sense of privilege, 'If only I may', his privilege didn't come from being born Jewish, it wasn't in his standing as a Roman citizen, nor his accolades in education or in work, His privilege was in Christ, and his life was lived as a testimony that whatever he endured was because he GOT TO do it for Jesus, it is a privilege to sacrifice for Him, He who justified Him by GRACE! Listen to his words from Romans 12 for they fit perfectly this occasion loved ones, allow his words to encourage you in this endeavor.

**Romans 12:1-3 ESV**

**A Living Sacrifice**

**12** I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a **living sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your **spiritual worship**. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

**Gifts of Grace**

<sup>3</sup> For by the **grace** given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

**To be able to Sacrifice for the Kingdom requires a diminished sense of your own importance.**

[CHALLENGE]<sup>6</sup>

**Sacrificial living is not quantified by our successes, failures, or degree of recognition. It is quantified by God. – The Gospel says your works are**

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<sup>6</sup> Shona Murray, Living with a Sacrificial Heart Table Talk Magazine, June 2020.  
<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2020/06/living-with-a-sacrificial-heart/>



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**already judged by God through Christ therefore successes and failures are judged the same.** You may think you don't have a lot to offer but a life poured out is what God is looking for, so stop worrying how good you can do it, and just practice doing it, and let God do the judging.

**Sacrificial living uses our own unique giftedness to bless others and resists trying to use gifts we don't have. The Gospel frees us to choose the lowly and the menial instead of striving for the more glamorous.** – It means that we need to spend some brain power and think about what we like and what we are good at and that is a good place to start, stop using that gift/talent just for yourself and put it to play for others.

**Sacrificial living remembers that God is the multiplier. He multiplies my meager efforts for the blessing of others.** – **The Gospel frees us from thinking our efforts won't have an effect.** The man that preached to Charles Spurgeon on the night of his conversion was a fill in pastor that wasn't supposed to speak that night, but what he had he gave to God and HE multiplied that effort a thousand times over through the redeemed life of Spurgeon.

**Sacrificial living requires proactive prioritizing in order to avoid long-term damage from reactive living. The Gospel calls us to orderly living where we pause, think, pray, keeping/protecting us from spiraling out of control through a lack of prioritizing the needs we really *can* meet.** – It means we look ahead as Paul did, as Christ perfected, weighing the cost of our lives, investing into what will be needed for our journeys, and we stop living as if we don't have cares about our future, you live with eternity on your mind.

**Last, to sustain a sacrificial life requires godly care for our blood-bought bodies and souls (1 Cor. 6:12–20), because we are the vehicles through which God blesses others.** – **The Gospel redeems our bodies now in their fallen state giving them a glorified purpose now.** It means your body is the vessel of God's will for your soul, it is the carrier of your destiny, and the transport to your next challenge. Take care of your body and mind and it will serve you well, in the dark night of your soul, train to live uncomfortably with exercise and restraint.



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Highlands may we all work hard to make much of Christ and as in the words of John the Baptist, may we all decrease so that He may increase, for it is a privilege to give our lives as a sacrifice for the will of God.

**[PRAYER]**

**[CALL TO OBEY]**

**Elder** – From Isaiah 43

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

3 For I am the Lord your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Fear Not, Church! We may not know what tomorrow brings, but our God knows because He ordained it, and He has promised to walk through it with us. Our call is to obey His Word and do the work He has given us to do, because it's for our good and His glory!

**[COMMUNION]**

Pastor Jody explains The Bread and the Wine

Followed by Family prayer over the Bread and the Wine – led by heads of households.

**[CONFESSION OF FAITH]**

\* The Congregation will stand

**Elder** – “Christians, what do you believe?”



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**Congregation** – From LBCF8.5 on Christ the Mediator

“The Lord Jesus has fully satisfied the justice of God, obtained reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those given to him by the Father. He has accomplished these things by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he once for all offered up to God through the eternal Spirit.”

**[OFFERING+LAST SONG]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that sacrificed the life of His only begotten Son, so we could all know the privilege of living sacrificially for Him.

Go in the name of the Son, that sacrificed His will unto the Father, His life unto His calling, and His blood for our Justification.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that helps us to now live sacrificially, to steer towards our hard paths, showing the world the value and worth of Christ.