

Struggles and Weaknesses in Service

4/2/17

Introduction

- Offering of Cain vs. Abel
 - Service is an offering
 - Whom are we serving?
 - Why are we serving?
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- St. Paul gives encouragement to the elders in Ephesus



Acts 20:18-19

“You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews...”

1. Becoming cool

- Starting hot, but becoming cool
- Ex: St. Mark
 - “But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.” (Acts 15:38)
 - “Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:11)



2. Pride

- “... serving the Lord with all humility...”
- Beginning: “I’m not worthy.”
- Then: “Why are other servants/coordinators not listening to me and not accepting my opinion?”
- Then: “I’m the glue that holds everything together.”



3. Tears

- Sign of a zealous servant
- Tears over his own sins
- The troubles of those whom he serves
- Lost souls



4. Fleeing from Trials

- Trials point to the envy of the enemy
- Trials strengthen the life of a servant
- Many serve, but when difficulty or trials come...they flee.
- “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:11-12)
 - Their own countrymen were reviling the disciples
 - Those of your own household (servants) may revile you

Acts 20:20-21

“...how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. Jealousy/competition

- “I kept back nothing that was helpful...”
- Sharing material (e.g., good book, website)
- Do I want to be special?
- Ex: Eldad and Medad
- “Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord’s people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.”
(Num. 11:29)

6. Partiality

- “... and taught you publicly and from house to house...”
- We must learn to deal with everyone
 - Annoying
 - Difficult
 - Good

7. Verbal witnessing

- “...testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks...”
- Do people outside of church know that you are an Orthodox Christian?
 - Do you talk about your faith?
 - Are you joyous and peaceful?
 - What’s on social media?
- All people I encounter should witness to me
- A qualification of an overseer
 - “Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1 Tim. 2:7)

Acts 20:22-23

“And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.”

8. Fear

- What would our response be?
- What do we fear?
 - Health
 - Your grades
 - Opinion of others
 - Money
 - Your reputation
- St. Paul's response...

Acts 20:24

“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24)

9. Downcast

- The message is joyous
- “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good...” (Ps. 34:8)
- All our icons should be in a state of joy – icon of Heaven



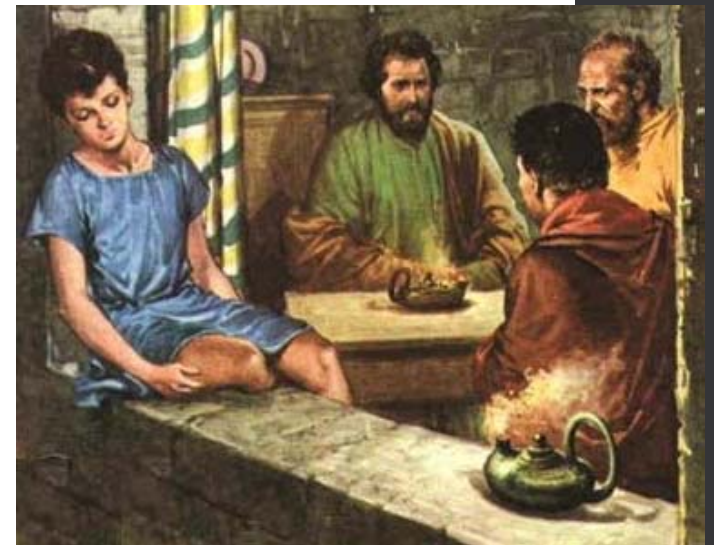
Acts 20:31

“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.”



10. Looking for rest

- When did St. Paul sleep?
 - “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”
(Acts 20:7)

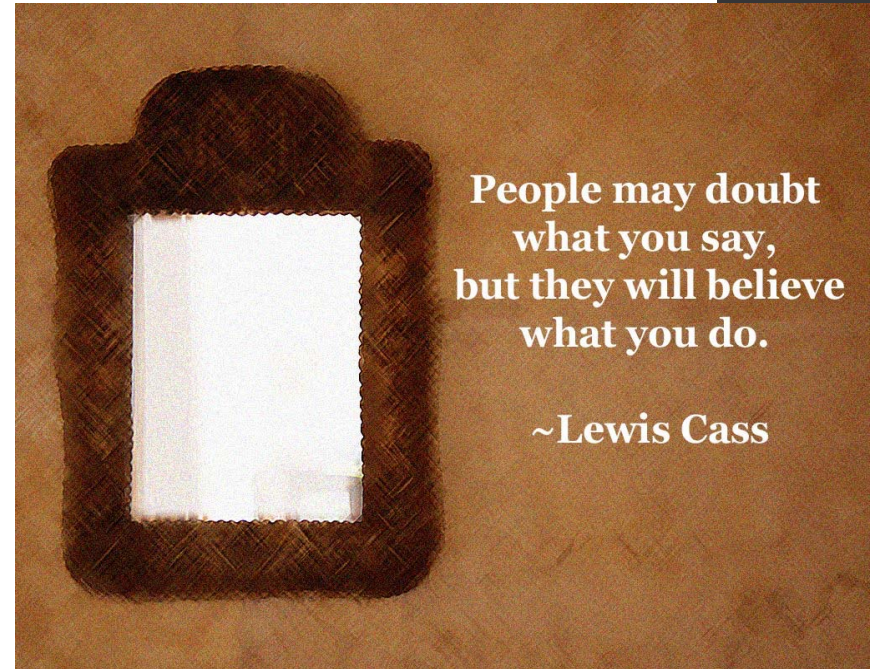


Acts 20:35

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

11. Words matching behavior

- The Lord Christ warned the people about the scribes and Pharisees
- “Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.” (Matt. 23:3)



Summary

- St. Paul stands before us as a good example of a servant
- The Church repeats this chapter when we celebrate the departure of a patriarch
- We can use this to measure ourselves