

## **LIFE OF PAUL SERIES**

### **PAUL'S FOURTH AND FINAL PHASE MINISTRY**

**We have noticed Paul's life can be separated into four phases. We have finished the third phase of Paul's life. We see how Paul enters into his fourth phase today. We have mentioned how in the first phase that there were supernatural works and supernatural leadings in his life, how God moved supernaturally in Acts 13 and spoke to him possibly through the audible voice. Even after he launched forth, God continues to speak into his life. It was a mixture of a leading from his spirit and leading from the voice of the Holy Spirit. Then he moved into the third phase and in the third phase it was purely leading by the human spirit because Paul had matured by that time. After that, he moved into the fourth phase and it was the highest phase of Paul's life.**

**In each phase, you will notice that his circle of influence and ministry widened. The first phase if you notice from his first missionary journey, it was just a small circle. Then as he moved into the second phase it was a wider circle in his second missionary journey. In his third missionary journey we find how he established himself in Ephesus and how the circle of influence was over all of Asia Minor. In Paul's fourth phases his circle of influence transcended his generation into our generation. In Paul's fourth phase, his influence was the widest possible. It transcends geographical and physical barriers and moved into our times today because Paul's writings were done mainly in his fourth phase and they still continue to influence our lives.**

**We've seen how that each phase shows the widening of his ministry influence but**

when we talk about public influence and in terms of his publicity, in his first phase he moved more and more into the public limelight. His second phase put Paul into an even greater limelight and the third, the widest public limelight. However a strange thing takes place in his fourth phase. Even though it was a step upward in God, to the eyes of men, it was a step downward. We have mentioned how every one of us will experience at least four phases in our lives and ministry. They will be similar to Paul's life in principle. They may be differences but in principle, the four phases will occur.

In the fourth phase of Paul's life, he moved back into obscurity. He moved back away from the public limelight even though in the Spirit he had actually moved upwards. And of all the phases I would think the fourth phase is the most difficult in anyone's life. We would have thought the first would be difficult. No, it is the fourth phase of a person's life or a person's profession if you are called into the business world. You will also find similarity in the fourth phase. The fourth phase is the hardest.

Lets look at the book of Acts as we consider the fourth phase of Paul's life and ministry. Acts 19 records the end of Paul's ministry in Ephesus and there was an uproar towards the end, in verse 41 *When he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.* Acts 20:1 *After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them and departed to go to Macedonia.* In Acts 20:1 Paul launches into his fourth and final phase of his ministry. His fourth phase came about not in a sudden way but it looks like a natural occurrence as Paul said goodbye and then launching forth. In verse 2 *Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him, as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.*

Paul was heading towards Jerusalem. Jerusalem is now his goal. It is his fourth phase of ministry and almost like Jesus' fourth phase. Jesus Christ in His fourth phase set His mind and heart toward Jerusalem. You remember the story of how through the villages He passed by and they did not receive Him because He was headed for Jerusalem and how James and John wanted to call down on fire because His face was set forth toward Jerusalem. So here Paul's face was set

toward Jerusalem in order to do his last and final work for God. Moving into the fourth phase, back away from popularity and fame into obscurity is very difficult. We will see how roadblocks were along Paul's way. The fourth phase is very hard for people to receive because firstly Paul had to die to self in order to say no to publicity. A lot of people if you put them in the limelight and you give them the honor and 'glory' as a public figure they will receive it and pass up but when that is taken away from them they feel lost. Yet in the fourth phase it would mean a voluntary surrender of being a public figure. Some people when they get power they don't know how to let it go. As we have mentioned it is one thing to hold on to something; it takes strength but it's harder to let go. And Paul had to let go of being a public figure and go back to obscurity and away from the limelight in his fourth phase.

*In Acts 20:21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 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.*

So Paul knew that he is going to go back to be obscure, unknown by face again, just like before he moved into the first phase. In verse 24 it says *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.* You can see that Paul knew that he was moving into his fourth phase. But the amazing thing is verse 22 he used a special word, he said, "I go bound in the spirit". We hear of the leading of the Spirit. We hear of the manifestation of the Spirit. But here it says 'I go bound in the spirit'. We have heard that the demons put people in bondage but we seldom hear of the fact that the Holy Spirit bound us onto something. What Paul is speaking is that it speaks of degrees of his yielding. Paul has yielded himself to the Holy Spirit so much like 'he is almost like a slave' to the Holy Spirit. He was a bond slave to the Holy Spirit and that position is only possible when we have grown quite deep in the Spirit, to the extend that the leading of the Spirit is like something placed upon you that you cannot help but do it. That's the degree of his yielding to God. We will consider only three areas.

The first area of his fourth phase is moving from popularity to obscurity. And there are three factors that block the way of going 'backward' into the fourth

phase. Firstly is self. It's not easy to turn over something that has been established for so long, recognized for so long, where acceptance and fame have been established, to turn away from it all and return to work in a quiet private life. It is hard for someone who has been in public life to go back to private life. In order to do that Paul had to die to himself. He said, "I am willing to die onto the Lord" meaning if God says die, he die. If God says live, he lives. He has reached a point where he is not moved by the things he has seen but he is only moved by the things that are not seen. Therefore the first factor is what I call a natural syndrome. That is why a lot of people never moved into their fourth phase. It's against natural feelings and natural laws. People want to go up and they don't want to go down and this instinct is built into us and it's rubbing against the grain of our very nature to say 'no' to publicity.

Secondly, Paul had to encounter well intentioned but ignorant Christians who didn't understand what God was saying to him. When you move into your fourth phase, you will have to learn like Paul to close your mouth like a sheep led to a shearer where the young in the Lord will in no way understand what you are doing because as I said it goes against the natural thinking totally. In the book of Acts 21 as Paul headed back to Jerusalem, he found roadblocks placed by Christians. Acts 20:25 *Indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.* That was very hard to take in the natural. They love Paul. They have been with Paul for three years. And Paul says 'you are not going to see my face any more' and 'I am not coming back again'. That was very hard for them to take. It's not easy for a natural man. Some people will ask, "Why must this thing be happening, I don't understand". You can never understand the cross. You can only receive the cross.

Usually every year I would have a convention in New Zealand and last year I remembered telling them that next year I am not coming for the convention for the Lord said 'no'. The organizer's heart dropped. I said, "Wait; I didn't say I am not coming back but I said I am not coming back next year". Because 1991 is the year that God told me to concentrate in the Asian region so my time is limited. God specifically told me I wouldn't be back again to do a convention until two years time. You could see their faces dropped. I have only been there just a week or so. What will happen if I were to minister to a group for three or four years and have to say goodbye it's not going to be easy on the natural man.

As Paul headed back to obscurity, he found this second roadblock. Surprisingly both ways got resistance. It's just like being on a dual carriage way; one way is going up, the other way going down. There is resistance to pass through all the time. When you want to rise up in life a lot of people resist you. When your ministry is about to be built you are resisted. And as God began to bless your ministry jealousy come and people will resist you for all manner of reasons. Those who are in the established ministry and want to maintain the status quo tend to be insecure and they will resist you. There is a lot of resistance until you are established. You would have thought arriving in your third phase, there would be no more resistance. Wait until you go to phase four. You want to go away and yet you still get resistance. People will say, "Don't leave because everyone needs a mentor".

What is happening in people's heart is that they have a sort of hero worship but God told Paul, "Walk down the steps". In the spirit he was walking up the spirit steps but in the natural he was walking down the steps. In Acts 21:3 they came by ship to a place called Tyre. In verse four they found some disciples and stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go to Jerusalem. That's very difficult to take. The Christians here were not leaders and they were normal Christians. The first roadblock was in himself. He overcame that. He was willing to die. He has gone down the step. But now the second roadblock is the Christians. These Christians knew enough of the Spirit to hear Him but doesn't know enough of the Spirit to interpret what they hear. So they misinterpreted. It's something like the old saying 'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing' where you have enough knowledge to do something half way and by doing it half way is better not to have it done in the first place. It's where you have enough of the Spirit to hear but not enough of the Spirit to discern. So Paul has this second roadblock of Christians whom the Bible mentioned that they told Paul. They instructed Paul. I don't know what actually took place but the summary of it possibly is that there they are in a prayer meeting. "O Paul, how wonderful to see you. We have heard of your great ministry all over Asia Minor and where are you going now?" "I am going to Jerusalem". "But Paul why are you not going to remain in the Gentile area where your ministry is so great, so well accepted, and God supplied all your needs". "Paul, why are going to Jerusalem." Then some of them come and said, "Thus says the Holy Ghost it's not God's will for you Paul

to go to Jerusalem". Look two plus two equals four. Look at the pros if you stay behind; all the Gentiles will be blessed and more churches will grow. Look at what you can do in Jerusalem after all Peter is already there. All these reasoning came but Paul knew what was in his heart. He had entered the fourth phase. And he must learn to surrender his coat to others. The resistance was from Christians who know enough of the Spirit but not totally of the Spirit. Paul just keep quiet, said nothing and he went off, determined to go to Jerusalem. So he passed through the second roadblock. One of the things you learn in leadership is you are prepared to be misunderstood.

Third roadblocks. Acts 21:8 while they staying in Philip's house in Caesarea, in verse 10 a prophet came and is one of the most famous prophets in the New Testament. Agabus was an established prophet and Agabus said, "The man to whom this belt belong shall be in prison in Jerusalem. He shall be bound". The prophecy was about Paul. The third roadblock is even harder, where even leaders misinterpret what God said to your own heart. Look at what happened after the prophecy. God didn't say not to go. God only spoke what was to happen. In verse 12 when we and those who are with us, Luke the physician and maybe Philip the evangelist and maybe all these people who are with him, when we heard that but because of our natural love for Paul, we said, "Paul please don't go." In verse 12, the Bible uses the word 'they pleaded with Paul'. In other words, they came to Paul and they said, "Please we beg of you not to go". It is very difficult to refuse them and God will not allow it until you are strong enough to take all these things. Even Luke who was his constant companion said, "Paul, see that prophecy is confirmed!" They all had their doubts about Paul's leading. The only one who didn't doubt is Paul himself.

The fourth phase is very difficult to take because when you walk to the cross you walk alone. God will not allow someone else to take a cross that belongs to you. When you walk to the cross not even your husband and your wife can be with you. When you go to the cross where Jesus wants you to go through you walk alone. Jesus walked alone. It is one of the hardest things to take. All of them were crying and Paul's own heart also was touched by such love. In verse 13 Paul answered *What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" Paul felt the tearing of his heart as he took phase four of his life to go back to

obscurity. Then verse 14 *When he would not be persuaded* meaning Paul stood firm. But many people don't know that in his heart of hearts he would want to do what they desire of him to do. That is why he said it is breaking his heart because his heart wants to go that way but the Lord wants him to go the other way.

You see stubbornness is relative. It's relative to a situation and relative to a person. Pride also is relative. It depends on whether you compare it with God's word and go. David was accused of pride when he was facing Goliath but yet in God's sight he was doing the right thing. You see pride, stubbornness and arrogance is in the heart of a person. It is not in what the person does but how a person does it. Because we human being cannot differentiate between the 'what' and the 'how'. And when the 'what' is determined and the person stick to it, we think that is stubbornness and pride. No! my friends. If you study the word 'pride', the word 'stubbornness' and the word 'arrogant' in the Bible you realize this, that each of us need perseverance in order to achieve anything in life. Each of us needs some form of discipline to succeed but perseverance is not pride, yet it can look like pride to people. People must remember what it is, doesn't determine whether it is stubbornness or pride, like you could see Paul's life. It looks like he just stubbornly wanted to go to Jerusalem. It's not what is done it is how it is done. That's where you can real tell the difference between pride and stubbornness, it's the heart.

For example you could be from a non-Christian home. I remember when I was called to the ministry, my father was still not in the Lord and my mother was a young Christian and my sister was the only one who knows the Lord at that time. When God called me to the ministry, my father wanted to throw me out of the house. They would promise everything if I would continue with what they want in my life but if I had followed that road, none of you would have seen me until today. I realize there is a difference, I disobeyed my father by following the Lord to the ministry but when I disobeyed I disobeyed in brokenness because my eyes were filled with tears. I had to choose between obeying God and obeying my parent's wishes but if I had disobeyed differently, the attitude, the how, if I had disobeyed by shouting at my father, if I had disobeyed by running my father down, if I had disobeyed by kicking things about and throwing things about, then that would be stubbornness. Can you see the difference? But if I had disobeyed and gone to the ministry with tears of brokenness knowing in the

depth of my heart that I had to give an account of my life to God and for the fear of God I would rather follow God even if I lose a home. The attitude and the 'how' it is done is different.

So in case some of you may misunderstand, like for example, some of you may face choices if you are from an unbelieving home and your father would not allow you to go to church, it depends how you react and not just what you do that determines your stubbornness and pride. If you know and you sort of pleaded with your father and said, "Papa I love Jesus. You could kill me or do whatever you want but I love Jesus. You can't stop me from following the God whom I believe. You could whip me and do whatever you want but I love you pa and I love Jesus. And I must obey Jesus".

That is what Paul said that expressed his determined attitude. However if you begin to scold your father and said, "What have you to do with my life? I am grown up now. I can do as I wish". That is pride. You get the same result in the end but you got it in different way. So here Paul looks like he is an old stubborn donkey as he determined to obey the call of God in his life to Jerusalem. To go against our natural being to follow the cross, to deny self is unnatural to a natural man. Paul went through the first step to go to the second hurdle and roadblock of being misunderstood by Christians and this is already a tough act. But when you passed that you got to go to the third one where even people who so called know the Lord, know the Spirit and have discerned the times and seasons may even misunderstand what God is doing in your life. Some will understand, some will not and you had to go through the third roadblock but here is where the leaders were matured.

You notice in Acts 20 when they saw that Paul really want to go that way, they didn't beat him up, they didn't chuck him to one side and said, "I will walk no more with you!" Instead they said, "Paul because we really love you, if you really believe that is from the Lord, we will be behind you". That's the maturity of the people in Acts 21:14 *So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."* In the end, they did give their blessings to the apostle Paul. In the fourth phase it's very difficult because the cross keep coming back into the picture in a very strong way. In this picture of the cross we have to

remember this, one day we all will have to account for our life in God. One day all of us will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and we will have to say to the Lord Jesus what we have done in our life. For some people they have an awareness of that but that awareness is very weak and not everybody is aware of that all the time, they are aware once in a while only.

By the time you reached the fourth phase that awareness consumes you. When the awareness is so strong in your life you become a very careful person in the things of the Spirit. You dare not move to the left or to the right in case it's not Him. Even if a thousand people were to pull you, you dare not because you know these thousand people will have to account for their own life but you are going to stand before God at the judgment seat of Jesus and give an account of your life. That must come so strong into our life that we determine 'come what may but may we do the perfect will of God in our life'. It doesn't matter if all hell broke loose, we must always live our life fearing God, that every word we say, every thought we take, every action we do, that we are able to give an account to Jesus and say, "Lord Jesus I have sought to live to my conscience and to the leading of Your Spirit as far as I possibly could". And Jesus will turn to you and say, "Enter thou into the joy of the Lord; thy good and faithful servant".

We all must remember this life is temporary. I am not living for this life because how long can you live, eighty years, a hundred years, a hundred and twenty years? We have to face an eternity. Can you imagine what we do in this short life determine some of those things over there. It is far better to be misunderstood by the whole world and live the perfect will of God and to be able to one day go to Jesus Christ and one day Jesus will be able to explain to those who didn't understand in your early life because by that time nobody can hide their heart. On this earth people can hide their heart. They say some thing but they mean another thing. Motivations are different. But one day when we face Jesus Christ and the light of Jesus shines upon our heart where there is no possibility of hiding your heart, our motives and your desire. And the Lord Jesus will be able to say this is right and this is wrong. So we have to live in that fear of God in our life in order to move into the fourth phase. That's only one of the things that took place in Paul's fourth phase. Fourth phase means pulling back your roots and turning back into obscurity. May God give us the grace that we will not be like the people of the world.

When we received power we want to keep it, hold it and die in it. Jesus received power but on the cross Jesus took everything He had and surrendered it. Even when Pontius Pilate said, "Don't you know that I have the power to set you free and the power to crucify you". If he only knew that the Jesus who was on trial had more power than him but who refused to use His power. Today Pontius Pilate has died but Jesus Christ is still alive. We are not sure whether Pontius Pilate knew the Lord or not. Some traditions say he did but now after two thousand years of history if Pontius Pilate were to come and stand before Jesus he will see who really has the power, who really was moving the right way. That is why you must understand for Jesus Christ it was a difficult thing for Him to say to His disciples 'every one of you will go astray. Every one of you will turn from Me.' And He will have to go to the cross alone. When you walk the fourth phase you learn what it is to walk alone.

How do we illustrate this in a spiritual sense? I believe that when God looks down on this earth He will see people at different levels of spiritually and different levels of faith and different revelation levels. And you find that it's almost like a pyramid. Down at the base of the pyramid there are a lot of believers and young Christians but the higher you grow in God and the holier you walk, you find that the numbers decrease. Then when you want to walk closer with God you climb up onto Mount Sinai to come face to face with God. You look around and here is only one person left, sometime just Joshua. Then you want to walk further with God. My friend if you walk with God you will discover that there is room at the top for many but not many have gone to the top. And here is the fact, how can those who walk far away from God understand those who have walked so closely with God. If a person walk at the first level, a person walk at this second level and a person walk at this third level and a person walk at this fourth level. How can someone who walks on the second level really understand a person who walks on the fourth level? It would just to be like someone who only knows elementary mathematics who tries to wrestle with fractal mathematics and double calculus. The one who wrestle with double calculus in mathematics and fractal mathematics can understand what you learn in elementary mathematics. But the one who only knows elementary mathematics can never understand the one who is doing the higher level of mathematics.

So in the same way the higher you walk in God the lesser there are of those who really understand you. It really gives the creep to your flesh because you say, "I don't want to be alone". That is why we try to encourage people and say "come lets have more people at the top". And we try to get more people praying longer time in God, remember if you lack worship in your life, you neglect prayer in your life. Even though you are number two, you have dropped down to number three. So you can never understand the decision made by those at that higher level. We move up and down according to our walk with God and we need to keep ourselves tuned to God's Spirit in order to follow Him and obey Him. That's the first thing that takes place as Paul enter into one of he highest realm, the fourth phase which even some others in the ministry do not go into. They only reached until the third phase.

The second thing that took place in the fourth phase of Paul's ministry is how he himself became a symbol to be either crucified or to be accepted. He became a symbol of what he represents. We have always said that to have a vision is one thing but to have that vision consume you is another thing. To have the thought and the idea is one thing but to be the very essence and personification of the idea is another. To build a boat is one thing but to have the boat carry you is another thing. So when you have the vision, is like you are building the boat. When the vision carries you, it is like the boat is now carrying you. You and the boat are one. The boat sink you sink. What has happened is Paul is so married to that vision, so passionately into the cause that God calls him that is literally impossible to separate him from the vision and the call that God has on his life.

It is almost like for example the call of God to Kenneth Hagin to teach faith to the church and if people don't like him many times is because they don't like that message. He had to accept the fourth phase here that he became a measuring ruler. We all can say 'don't reject the Lord' but do you know how the Lord tests whether we reject Him, by whether we reject the people He sent and the message He sent. Jesus told the Israelites "You reject the prophets I sent therefore you are rejecting Me". Yet it's easier to say, "I will accept the Lord" but not accept those whom He sent. That's how we always reason it out but here Paul becomes married to the revelation, the cause or whatever he brings forth.

Every one of you who is born on this earth and who is in the kingdom of God now has something by which God has to give to the body of Christ. The Bible says in the book of Ephesians 4 something wonderful, something special, to contribute to the entire body of Christ. Eph.4:16 *from whom the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies.* Every one of you supplies something special that no other person can supply. Whether you are the head, whether you are the tail, whether you are the leg, whether you are the hand. Each one of you has something special that God wants to work through as a total body of Christ. Your uniqueness is there. Every one of us has to identify that special thing that God wants you to bring forth. It could be a revelation. It could be a method that God ordains through your life. For example God called people like Hagin to emphasize faith in God and Alexander Dowie to emphasize the healing ministry. So by rejecting him they reject the healing ministry. God raised up people to become bearers of standard. Each one has a different banner. For some there is faith, some their banner is healing and some the banner is the Charismatic move and each one has their own different banner to carry. The person is so married to the banner that you cannot differentiate the two at the fourth phase.

What is Paul's banner? Looking carefully at the book of Acts when he went to Jerusalem he was captured. Acts 21:18 *On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told them in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children or to walk according to the customs. Do you know an interesting thing? Even the church in Jerusalem found it hard to accept Paul, what about the Gentiles and the other Jews! Even the church found that this Paul, an apostle to the Gentiles, sometimes looks very extreme. They have heard that he was telling people not to keep the Jewish laws, something that they advocate and practiced. The accusation was of course not true and even Paul had to wrestle with rumors because Paul never told anybody not to circumcise the Jews. Paul was not bothered of the Jews keeping their traditions. So they were telling Paul and said, "Paul we heard this rumour about you which was not true,*

in order for them to see that you really don't teach like that would you go along with this Jewish custom". Behind it you could find even though they accept Paul, they feel uncomfortable with Paul.

You know some people are rejected and some people are accepted but after they are accepted, people still feel uncomfortable. You know what is like in the ministry, sometimes people accept you because to reject you is worse than to accept, so I have to accept you. I cannot help but to accept you because you are there. So they accept you but they accept you uncomfortably. So there was discomfort. We are not comfortable with his doctrine that these Gentiles have no need to keep Jewish laws. We are a little bit uncomfortable with that kind of theology. But remember Paul was specially called to the Gentiles. It's just like this, if somebody is called by God to be an evangelist, to stir evangelism in the church, every time they come to any church, to the pulpit, they will always say, "Come on you lazy fellows. Stop sitting on your pews. When was the last time you witness for God". Many of us will feel uncomfortable and we ask why don't this fellow have more tact. Why don't this fellow be a bit more 'cool'. We realize that this person has his own special brain and his own special banner, so everywhere they go they carry the banner. By removing the banner you are removing them. In the end you got to accept them and you are uncomfortable with them.

People have always a cause, they always champion a certain cause. As long as they championed a cause without denying another cause, no problem. So sometimes in a big church we got a group say, "we have neglected this. We must do this". Then another person say, "We have neglected this, we must do that". Yes, but we must not do something to the rejection and denial of another. So sometimes a group will come and say, "You have neglected evangelism". Then another group will come and say, "You have neglected fellowship". If they realize every one has their cause, yet there are anointed causes and there are non-anointed causes that comes just because of human desires and zeal. But Paul had a special anointing to the Gentiles, everywhere he goes he talk about faith. Just mention the name "Kenneth Copeland," some of you might say, "Alleluia" and some of you might say, "O dear!" What went on in your mind? When I mention "Kenneth Copeland" some of you immediately think of prosperity teaching. Why is that name linked that way? They have their special cause. You may feel

uncomfortable about them but they have their own special emphasis. You see what happens is that some times you need somebody standing at the extreme in order to balance the other end. It's just like if you are pushing a round barrel. Do you know that the greatest effort is when you begin? The first gear of your car is the most powerful, it needs to push the entire car for a good start but after the car takes off you can lessen the amount of power. Supposing you push a barrel and it starts rolling, the momentum will build up. Then you want to stop the barrel. Do you know it takes a lot of effort to also stop it! It takes the same effort to stop it as to start it, provided it is not slowed down by friction.

Some people think that in space there is no weight and everything is very easy to push around. Not quite, there is a difference between weight and mass. Mass is still present in space. For example you could be an astronaut in space, repairing some satellite. Supposing this satellite is slowly moving and another big mass is coming towards you and you are in between. You think in outer space there is no weight so it's easy to push the oncoming mass away. You will be surprised that you cannot push it. What happen if the two masses began to move closer, with you in between them? You will be crushed to death in outer space. It is not possible to stop that mass unless you got the equivalent power to set a reaction equal to that and cancel it. You will still need a force capable to stop ten tons of mass even though in outer space, there is no weight.

So what we are talking about is, sometimes in order to start something and stop something God uses a man or woman to be at the extreme end in order to pull or to stir or to stop. And they become the very symbol of the revelation, doctrine, method, or cause that God wants to use. By rejecting them in the end actually you reject the message of God. By rejecting them we reject the methods of God. Which is why the Bible tells us to prove all things, hold fast to that which is good. So Paul was a special gift to the Gentiles. In chapter 22 there were two things that Paul stood for that he represented. Acts 22:1 *Brethren and fathers hear my defense before you now.* Then in verse 21 *Then He said to me, "Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles."* Verse 22 they listened to Paul until he mentioned Gentiles and they all went into an uproar.

It would be just like in the early days of the Charismatic move you could have

people who are very friendly but the moment you talk about speaking in tongues they become 'lions'. So Paul was giving a very nice testimony and they all listen quietly. The moment Paul mentioned Gentiles they went into an uproar. It was like the dinner bells for lions. Paul represents the acceptance of the gospel to the Gentiles. Just because someone mentioned a certain word, people get offended. Jerry Seville was talking about how many times in the early days the moment people mention the word 'balance' the Charismatics reacted. The Word of Faith people reacted. When you mention to the non-faith people 'confession' they too reacted. Then you mention to the faith people 'balance' their hair stirred up. They think 'balance' equals compromise. A lot of times we react to words not because of its actual dictionary meaning. We react to words because of what those words mean to us, we react because of our perception and we have an emotional feeling over different words.

In chapter 22 when he mentioned 'Gentiles' their emotions were all released. That was one of the things that is Paul represented a cause in chapter 23. The other thing that he represents in his fourth phase was in Acts 23:6 *But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being Judged!"* The other is the resurrection from the dead of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Paul was on testimony for two causes, the 'Gentiles' question and the question of 'Jesus Christ's resurrection'. He represented Jesus. When they rejected him they rejected Jesus. Remember the Lord Jesus told the disciples when He sent them out two by two. He said, "Whom so ever receive you receive Me. Whosoever reject Me reject the Father." We need to be very balanced as we look at the scriptures. We emphasize on the 'going' but lack the 'being'.

Some congregations that are managed by boards of elders that hire and fire pastors on the basis of their sermons may tend to produce Christians who segregate the message from the messenger. They place a greater value on the message than on the messenger. If the messenger's messages have failed to meet the board's expectations, out he goes. Never mind, there are many pastors out there looking for a job and we can easily find a replacement. That is not good because how we treat a messenger is exactly how Jesus is taking us as treating Him. For God we need to be balanced about that.

On the other hand, denominations that are dominated by established centuries-old hierarchies tend to exalt the leadership's pronouncements higher than the Word. This is unscriptural. That is an extreme end. Yet other Christians react to that and go to the other extreme end. We don't care who said the message. We don't care who that messenger or vessel is. We have to care because if the vessel doesn't live their life right, we don't have the message. You see, the messenger and the message must be one! So we cannot move to the other extreme where we honor the message without honoring the man. The other extreme is when some Christians are so free and equal in their own eyes that they forget to honor specially chosen vessels who deliver God's messages.

Let me tell you God doesn't look at it that way. We all are equal in the sight of God but we do not all have equal authority and equal responsibility. In the Kingdom of God there is no democracy but theocracy! So what happen if people divide the person from the message that they bring? God never does it. He told His disciples when they went out two by two, who ever rejects you rejects Me. Let me tell you it's far easier to reject a human vessel than to reject the Almighty God coming Himself because many of those vessels are not perfect.

I have learned my lesson, my friends. You don't honor a person because they are perfect. You honor them because of whom they represent. If our country were to send a diplomat to another country, the other country honors the diplomat not because of who the diplomat is. But remember anything that happens to that diplomat reflects the other country's attitude towards our country. Which is why for example sometimes a man or woman of God comes, we love them and show respect to them. We don't do that because that person is perfect. If you love a person because he or she is perfect and the vessel is perfect we will end up loving nobody except the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Lord said, "If you love Me, you will love those who are My own". We need to keep that in our heart and in our mind even though they are imperfect vessels. Paul said that we are only clay vessels bearing the treasures of God inside us. But yet if the clay vessels are broken, they are no more clay vessels to bear that same message.

Here on the one end are those who honor the people more than the message, which is wrong. On the other hand, are those who honor the message more than the person, which is also wrong because if you don't take care of the vessel, you don't have the message. On the other hand there is no right and no sense of taking care of a vessel where the message is not coming forth at all. We are questioning ourselves why should we be taking care of vessels if they don't have a message at all. The balance is we must learn to honor both the vessel and what the vessel contain. That's the balance position in God that we need to examine and to have in our life.

Bearing in mind this fact I have to say, it is far easier to reject a person than to reject a message. A lot of people who reject a message or reject something that the Lord is saying, they reject it because that person has stumbled them. Let us not make that fatal error.

Paul was so married to the message that he brought, that to reject Paul was to reject the manifestation of what God was doing in their generation. Which is why at the fourth phase, a person becomes the very personification of the vision that they bring! If people hate Jesus, then the followers of Jesus will be the ones taken and persecuted. If people hate authority, then the authority figures will be the ones that bear the brunt of such people's hatred. If some Christians in Jerusalem hate the Gentiles from getting the truth and didn't like going to the Gentiles, then they will automatically also hate Paul because he represented the message that God came to save the Gentiles too.

So this second point of the fourth phase is not easy because who wants to be married to the message and die for the message they live for. Who wants to be so interlinked to the cause, that when God says the cause is being rejected and you represent the cause, you must take that rejection as a part of rejection of the cause. On judgment day, if you have not rejected that cause, you would become that instrument by which God could judge the others who rejected this truth. It's not easy and Paul had to stand his ground.

Now, the third thing that happened in the fourth phase was very precious. The third thing that happened in his fourth phase was as I said in the eyes of men they see Paul going down in publicity but in the eyes of God he was going higher. Paul was reaching a place and a realm spiritually that nobody has ever reached before. But God's ways are not our ways. He wanted Paul to reach into that realm in the way that no human being can understand. In the book of Acts 9 when the prophecy was given to Paul in verse 15 *The Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*

Now there were two parts of that prophecy that was not fulfilled even in his third phase. Paul has not really gone to kings and Paul had not really gone to the children of Israel, he had in some measure but not totally. So of the three prophecies, going to the Gentiles was totally fulfilled but going to the kings was not fulfilled at all and going to the Jews the children of Israel was partially fulfilled. Even though Paul had finished his third phase there was still one and a half portion of that prophecy yet to be fulfilled. And God was going to fulfill that last and final prophecy in his fourth phase but in a manner that no man would have accepted. What God did was through his obscurity where he was a prisoner and he was taken away from the public eyes, Paul testified to kings, to governors and even to the Roman Emperor Caesar where no Christians had ever testified. No one up till his time has ever testified before the Roman Emperor Caesar. The Roman Caesar had not been evangelized and witnessed to. The governors Felix and Agrippa have not heard the gospel presented like Paul presented. You see sometimes God chooses to do things away from the public eyes and what God was doing was that away from the public eyes, God fulfilled the other prophecies that was in Paul's life. And He fulfilled it in such a way that if you don't examine it carefully you don't realize that it was taking place.

In the book of Acts Paul was called to testify before several people. He was called to testify before the high priest Ananias, so he testified to the children of Israel and even to the main leaders of Israel. He bore the message like Elijah bore the message to king Ahab. He was rejected but do you know Paul died and went to God so did Ananias the high priest. In the days to come, Ananias the high priest will be called to court in the judgment seat. Do you know how Jesus is going to judge? Jesus is going to pull out the Ananias of Acts 23 and said, "I sent My

apostle Paul to you. He gave that message and you rejected him. What have you to say? Now you know why Paul has to go, because someone has to go in order for God to use him as proof that He has done His best to reach to Ananias, even though they were going to be rejected.

Sometimes you read Isaiah, you ask, "Isn't it silly to send Isaiah to the Israelites knowing very well that they will reject Isaiah," but God said, "Isaiah you still must go". Why, why must God sent Isaiah to be rejected! So that one day at the judgment seat God will say, "Your generation who lived in Isaiah's time cannot say that I didn't give you a chance." Not one of them can say God didn't give them a chance because they were the ones who persecuted Isaiah. At first I could not understand why God told Isaiah, "You will preach and they will not hear. You will speak and they will not hear".

My friends why do I continue preaching even though many times after I preached my heart out, only some understood the things of God and moved deeper. Some take it easy and lightly. Why do I continue preaching? Because my friends when I preach and I obey God, the blood of the people whom I preached to is no longer on my hands. They are answerable to God so that one day when they stand before God at the judgment seat and they said, "God you didn't gave us a chance to grow in You". And God will be saying, "I did". And no one who will be able to say they have not been given the chance. You see we are doing our work not just for here, not just for temporal earth; whatever we are doing is for eternity. We live for eternity, my friend! Whether you are rejected or accepted you are not living because you are accepted. You don't do your ministry, you don't do your work, and you don't do anything just because you are accepted. We do it because it is God's call in our life and His words burn in our heart and we have a conscience that we have to bear the burden of God; to share what needs to be shared. If it is rejected so be it, if it is accepted so be it. But we want to do what God told us to do.

That's what Paul was like. So he testified before Ananias and I can tell you, people can kill the body, they can put it into prison, they can do all things but they cannot do anything about the spoken word. Like Paul said when he was in prison, "They can tie me up but they cannot tie the spoken word that has gone

forth". Today that same Paul whom Ananias sent and he has pronounced judgment on Paul, the same Paul will pronounce judgment on Ananias on the judgment seat. The same words that Ananias has spoken are going to be taken, he cannot answer to Paul in Acts 23 but he has to answer to Paul on the judgment seat. In Acts 24:10 Paul testified to Felix so that Felix cannot stand at the judgment seat and said, "I did not have a chance to receive Jesus Christ because Felix did not have a chance to receive Jesus. The only problem is that many times people are so tied up to the traditions, so tied up to the things of this life, that to receive Jesus is to be ostracized. So it's easier not to be ostracized and reject Jesus. If only they knew the eternal consequences.

In Acts 25 Paul testified before king Agrippa. See God was fulfilling the prophecy that Paul will testify to kings but in the eyes of the church and in the eyes of the average Christians, Paul was a prisoner, a criminal, a reject, a failure in the eyes of men. But though you may fail in the eyes of the world if you obey God, you are a success. Remember it's important to obey our conscience and our heart. That is our only justifier on that day. Then Paul in the end appealed to Caesar in Acts 26:32 *This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.* Paul appealed to Caesar and I could see even though it not recorded in the book of Acts, after he went to Rome, Paul stood before the Roman Emperor, the Supreme Ruler of the entire Roman Empire. Apostle Paul a prisoner before the Roman Emperor in luxury but Paul testified about Jesus Christ so that today that luxury has gone, today that light has ended. The Roman Emperor who was in Paul's time was Nero, one of the worse Roman Emperor and Nero cannot stand before the judgment seat and say, "Almighty God You didn't give me a chance". Because Almighty God is going to say, "I've sent My apostle Paul the best and you rejected him". See we live not only for results on this earth we live for eternal result. Paul's prophecy was fulfilled in his life as he testified before kings.

Just to bear in mind in Acts 24:27 Paul was in prison for two years. During that period he did not just immediately testify to one king after another, there were big gaps in between, yet he was in God's perfect will. How do we know he was in God's perfect will? Because in Acts 23:11, after he was captured the Lord Jesus appeared to him to strengthen Paul because Paul was in the right move of God, even though he looks like a failure to the world. Yet he was moving in the correct direction in God. So in Acts 24:27 it was the two years in prison that Paul wrote

Ephesians and Colossians. Why did he write it? They were still fresh in his mind, remember he had just said goodbye to them in Acts 20 and now in Acts 24 after a few trials, Paul's mind was still with the Ephesians, his love was still drawn to them and he wrote the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians from Acts 24:27. And by that time it was about A.D. 64 and by that time Paul has written several epistles. He has already written First and Second Thessalonians in Acts 18:5, Romans and Galatians in Acts 18:11, First and Second Corinthians in Acts 19 and Ephesians and Colossians in Acts 24:27. And in Acts 28:30 there was another two years delay as Paul waited for trials. For those two whole years he settled in a rented house and received all who came to him. While he was there, it was about A.D. 65 in Acts 28:30, Paul wrote the other two epistles Philippians and Philemon. That leaves only four epistles more. So we have tied up the life of Paul and showed where he has written all those epistles. Paul wrote the Philippians and Philemon because he was in the Roman area, that is why the book of Philippians talked about the Royal Guard in Rome.

The fourth area as we see the apostle Paul's life, unknown to Paul possibly, unknown to the Christians in that time but known to God is that Paul's writing ministry was going to affect more people and preached to more people than he could have ever preached in his entire life. Yet in his time the fruits were not there yet but I have been to the seminary and studied theology and literally all bible scholars recognize the great input of the apostle Paul's writings and theology in the life of the modern church. In his death he reached more people than in his life. The ways of God are not the ways of men. Human beings look for immediate reward but God looks for eternal reward.

Sometime after his trial and before he was beheaded, in about A.D. 67, Paul wrote Hebrews, Titus, First and Second Timothy. So that accounts for all of Paul's epistles that he has written in his entire life. One of the last epistles he wrote before he died is the epistle of Second Timothy. I have stood in the funeral of many people and always the same thing come, we always never thank a person enough and appreciate a person enough until it's too late and they have died. But I realize that as we began to look at these things, that in life or in death we don't realize how much we are doing for God and we don't realize how much somebody else is doing for God, even in the natural world until that person dies or goes home to be with God.

When Paul died it was one of the largest 'vacuum' that the church of Jesus Christ had to fill. But these were his words before he died in II Tim. 4:6 *For I am already being poured out.* Now he has finished his fourth phase and it was going to end and he know that he has completed the task. And the fourth phase he was almost hidden away from the eyes of the church. Although he was up there in the spirit, in the natural he was down there as a prisoner away from the public eyes. As I mention again when you go to the cross, when you live many others come to you, but when you die you die alone.

In II Tim. 4 Paul says in verse 16 *At my first defense no one stood with me.* Do you know why no one can stand with him? As I mentioned there was level one, level two, level three, level fourth. Nobody had reached level four like Paul, so nobody could stand the same way he stood. Every body was frightened, nobody dare to die for going to the Gentiles. Nobody dare to die for preaching the gospel in the way Paul preached. At his first defense he says no one stood with me. All fled. When you walk the cross you walk alone.

I have been through the cross many times. Let me tell you in the natural all you want is a shoulder to lean on. All you want is a hand on your back to say 'press on brother' and you find there is none. Because when you really go to the cross that Jesus wants you to go, at the level that Paul was walking, no one can understand. Because there are level one, level two, level three, level four. Many who are at level two or level three can only see but don't even understand. That's why in your personal cross you must be prepared being brave and walk alone to the cross. And sow your life as a seed that other may live.

Here in Philippians chapter four Paul says in verse 7 *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* Finally verse 8 if you work for God, if you are in the ministry or you are out there doing something faithfully for God, don't look for finances as a reward, don't look for recognition, and don't look for popularity. If you do that you are carnal. All these things pass away. You can't take them beyond the tomb. It will only make a difference whether there be

more people mourning for you or less. But my friends the greatest reward that Paul worked his entire life for was, when he came to the judgment of believers one day. The Lord Jesus was going to call Paul by name and there in front of all the other apostles, in front of all the Christians who had lived from the time of Acts until our time, until the rapture. And you are going to see the apostle Paul marching up with the joy on his face to receive the crown of the Lord and that crown that he receive from God, he is going to wear for eternity. And throughout eternity when you meet the apostle Paul you will see Paul with the crown on him. That tells you that he has lived his life the way God wanted him to live. Paul was not interested in money, position, or recognition. He wanted the crown that comes from Jesus Christ. In the book of II Tim. 4 *which the Lord the righteous Judge will give to me on that day.* Don't look for reward because you cannot take them. They are only here to make life a lot easier and more comfortable for a short time that's all. My friends the work that God has for your life in Phil. 4:8 the most precious thing is the crown that God has for your life.

[Break to sing a song]

It actually says the things that we love and hold dear to our heart are not ours but they are just borrowed to make life a little pleasant for you and me. There is nothing to boast whether you are rich or poor. There is nothing to boast whether you have a thousand degrees after your name. Or whether you have been recognized and honored by the world but what really matters is whether God has honored you. That's what it counts my friends.

In II Tim 4:8 Paul says that's the purpose for his life. This life is only like a vapor and a mist of smoke. We live only for that crown and the honor that only God can give and that no man can give. May God cause us to understand that this one solitary life yielded to Jesus Christ, the life of the apostle Paul could have such an impact upon our lives today. Your life today if you live it for God and for eternity can affect other lives for eternity. Would you give your life to God even this day? If you have worked for some worldly honors and your motives are for some worldly possessions, you have to give an account to God. They are only like little sweets that children want to have but they are not going to last for a long time. Whatever you have from God, remember there is nothing to boast. There is no place where we can be proud or have pride. All things come from Him all things

are in Him and all things are through Him. And we must recognize that and give Him all glory worship and honor.