

NT LESSON 32

“LIVE IN THE SPIRIT”

Acts 18:23-20:38; Galatians
by Ted L. Gibbons

INTRODUCTION: Paul was a witness of God in every situation in which he found himself. He had been given this direction at the time of his conversion. Ananias said to him on the day he was healed and baptized,

The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. *For thou shalt be his witness unto all men* of what thou hast seen and heard (Acts 22:14-15, emphasis added).

All of us who are under the covenant of baptism are obligated to “stand as witnesses of God at all times and in all things, and in all places that [we] may be in, even until death” (Mosiah 18:9). No one ever did this any better than Paul. And the likelihood of death was never a determining factor in his witnessing. Paul never sought a safer environment on his own, but at least eight times in the book of Acts when Paul was in danger, the disciples tried to move him out of harm's way (see Acts 9:24-25; 9:29-30; 17:5-10; 17:13-14; 19:28-31; 20:22-24; 21:4, 10-13). The Lord had commanded him: “Speak, and hold not thy peace” (Acts 18:9). And that is what he did for the final thirty years of his life, regardless of personal danger.

Paul went where he was supposed to go and said what needed to be said. If he could not make a personal appearance, he wrote letters. Paul's life and his epistles make it abundantly clear that Paul was ready at any time to *speak and hold not his peace*.

I. PAUL TEACHES, BAPTIZES, AND CONFERS THE HOLY GHOST ON BELIEVERS IN EPHEBUS.

Paul spent some time at home in Antioch following his second mission (see Acts 18:22,23), but he was not given to protracted sabbaticals. Before very long, “he departed (again!) and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.”

In Ephesus, where Paul spent almost three years, he heard of a most remarkable man, a “certain Jew named Apollos.” Apollos knew of the baptism of John but not of the Holy Ghost. However, even without that gift in his life, he

1. Was an eloquent man (18:24)
2. Was mighty in the scriptures (18:24)
3. Was instructed in the way of the Lord (18:25)
4. Was fervent in the Spirit (18:25)
5. Was willing to speak and teach “diligently the things of the Lord” (18:25)
6. Mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly (18:28)
7. Showed “by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ” (18:28)

Apollos sounds very much like John the Baptist, preparing the way for the coming fulness in Ephesus and Corinth. Members who heard him speak in the synagogue on a Sabbath took him aside and “expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly” (Acts 18:26).

When Paul arrived at Ephesus, he met certain disciples who had been baptized with the baptism of John. They may have been disciples of Apollos who had departed for Corinth. When Paul asked them if they had received the Holy Ghost, they said, “We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2).

Paul knew what we know. Anyone commissioned by Christ who performs a baptism does so with the promise that the gift of the Spirit will follow. Whoever had baptized these disciples was not sent forth by proper priesthood authority. Paul baptized them again, “in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy ghost came on them and; and they spake with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:5,6).

Paul knew what we must know. This gift of the Holy Ghost is an absolute imperative in our lives if we mean to earn exaltation.

I spoke at my granddaughter’s baptism in July. My assigned topic was the Holy Ghost.

I told her that I have a picture of her with her sister on my computer wallpaper. “Every time I turn on the computer, she is there with you,” I said.

If she could be with you all the time in your life, would she help you choose the right? This 8-year-old was pretty sure she would. I asked the same questions about her mom and her dad. She thought that if one of both of them could be with her all the time, she would be able to make pretty good decisions because someone would always be there who knew more than she did to help her.

I even asked about President Hinckley. This little girl thought that he would help her with her decisions too. But she agreed with me that he might be too busy to follow her around 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. “But if he could, you would always know the best thing to do, wouldn’t you?” I asked. She was pretty sure that was true.

Then I asked her what it would be like to have a member of the Godhead with her all the time. We read 2 Nephi 32:5.

For behold, again I say unto you that if ye will enter in by the way, and receive the Holy Ghost, it will show unto you all things what ye should do (2 Nephi 32:5)

I am amazed at this—that God would give all of his covenanting children continuous access to a being who knows everything. This is what Paul was doing for the unconfirmed disciples in Ephesus. And he did it with the proper authority.

This chapter contains additional emphasis on the need for proper authority in this work.

Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded (Acts 19:13-16).

The words of this work might be spoken without priesthood authority; even

the forms of the ordinances might be practiced, but without ordination to the priesthood by one with authority, it is all show without substance. And proper record-keeping is, in our day, an indispensable part of this process as well. I ordained a young man a Priest two weeks ago. He is in his twenties and making a great effort to return to full activity in the church. When I asked him, he assured me that he had been ordained a Priest. Even his mother was certain. But the records of the Church listed him as a Teacher. We performed the ordination again. Now there is no question.

As great an evangelist as Apollos was, Paul was greater. I am continuously amazed at what he does as at the zeal with which he does it.

In Ephesus he “went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8) This must be the longest sermon on record! Even a deacon sitting though this might learn to love a High Councilman!

When the Jews in the synagogue were hardened against him, he “separated the disciples, disputing [teaching] daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks (Acts 19:10,11).

In Acts 20 we find Paul preaching

publicly, and from house to house. Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (20:20-21).

Paul charged the leaders of the Church at Ephesus: to “remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31).

You will not be surprised to read in these chapters that even Paul’s ministry in Ephesus encountered opposition.

A craftsman named Demetrius was terrified of the success of this Roman Jew. He manufactured silver shrines for the goddess Diana. Since her temple at Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the tourist trade was lucrative, but if Paul were to turn enough people away from

this idol worship, then

not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth (Acts 19:27).

I wonder how many times in the history of the world the pocketbooks of men have intervened between their hearts and the manifestations of the Spirit. In a city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, I taught the gospel to a man who owned a bar. He and his family were prepared and excited and, before long, baptized. During a visit not long after they joined the church, the father took me into an office in his business and said something like this. "I have a problem. I make my living selling stuff that I do not believe people should use."

Not very long after, he sold his bar. Unable to find new employment for a while, he lived on the proceeds of the sale and spent his days working on the new chapel being constructed in his city. When the building was finished and a church reorganization occurred, he became the bishop of his ward. A few years later he became Stake President.

He was a man unlike the silversmiths of Ephesus. He refused to let his silver impede his spirituality. This is a lesson we must all learn, for as the Savior said, "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23).

Aroused by the claims of Demetrius, the whole city of Ephesus rushed into the theater. We assume this was the temple of the great goddess Diana, which, according to ancient records held about 24000 people. For two hours these people shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Think about that service the next time you get bored at stake conference.

II. PAUL GIVES A FAREWELL ADDRESS TO CHURCH LEADERS FROM EPHEBUS.

"After the uproar was ceased" (Acts 20:1), Paul departed from Ephesus and went to Greece. On a Sunday he spoke to the saints in Troas. He was leaving the next day, and had a great deal to say, and so he "continued his

speech until midnight” (Acts 20:9). Elder McConkie said,

Sermons can and sometimes should be long. The modern penchant for capsule presentations often deprives men from coming to a full knowledge of the doctrines of salvation. Who among us would object to listening to Paul or Peter or Joseph Smith for as many consecutive hours as human strength allowed? (DNTC, v.2, p. 176).

But not everyone was captivated.

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead (Acts 20:9).

Let that be a warning to all of us who have a tendency to doze off when long-winded speakers claim the pulpit. Paul was not deterred, however. He healed the young man, broke bread with the saints, “and talked a long while, even till break of day . . .” (Acts 20:10-12).

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the church leaders to meet him there (Acts 20:17) for a farewell address. His review of his credentials is touching. I will highlight the characteristics of Paul that made him great among these people:

18. When they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, ***from the first day*** that I came into Asia, ***after what manner I have been with you*** at all seasons,

19. ***Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations***, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:

20. And how ***I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you***, but have shewed you, and have ***taught you publickly, and from house to house***,

21. ***Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*** .

. .

26. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that ***I am pure from the***

blood of all men.

27. For **I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God** (Acts 20:18-21, 26,27,34).

34. Yea, ye yourselves know, that ***these hands*** [Paul's hands] ***have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.***

Paul departed knowing that hard times were in his future.

22. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there:

23. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

25. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.

But Paul's entire life since his conversion had been hard. You can read a long time in Acts and the epistles before you will find Paul discussing any of the easy things he had to do. But no prospect of danger moved him. The thing that mattered was not personal safety—"neither count I my life dear unto myself"—but that he should finish his life, his course, with joy in the Lord.

Paul warned the Ephesians about external enemies whom he called "grievous wolves," and internal apostates who would arise "speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29,30).

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship (Acts 20:36-38).

III. PAUL CHASTISES AND COUNSELS THE GALATIAN SAINTS.

Sometime during his third mission, Paul wrote a letter to the saints in

Galatia. Word had by some means come to him that the members in branches there had returned to some of the practices of the Law of Moses. He was astounded at their regression.

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed that many of the ordinances and requirements of the Law of Moses were still binding on New Testament Christians. Their influence seems to have troubled the saints of Galatia and pulled many of them back into the morass of daily rituals enjoined by the Law of Moses. These Judaizers seem to have taught that Paul was teaching the rejection of the Law in order to make the gospel more pleasing to converts, but that he had no authority to do so. Note Paul's response to this:

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:10-12).

I wonder if we are ever guilty of preaching in such a way as to make the doctrines more acceptable to our hearers. Do we ever choose to overlook or under-emphasize certain requirements of the kingdom in order to avoid offense or argument? Paul would never have done this. He spoke the truth the way he learned it by revelation after his conversion.

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went*

into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days (Gal. 1:15-18, emphasis added).

Paul learned the doctrine in the deserts of Arabia, conferring with the Spirit and with the scriptures. After three years he traveled to Jerusalem, and in fifteen days received the apostolic seal on his understanding and his teachings from the President of the Church. Those were Paul's credentials. He had been taught by Peter, and, years later, accepted by Peter, James, and John (Ga1. 2:9). Thus Paul can write, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:20).

The message of this letter is probably best summarized in Galatians 2:16.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Suppose God had reduced all of the commandments of the Gospel to one command: "Thou shalt pull a train to the top of Mount Everest by thy own power." No need to repent or love or forgive or attend meetings or do our home and visiting teaching. Just pull the train to the top. We would all be on our way to the "dark and benighted dominions of Sheol," because none of us—not a single one—could ever comply. Perhaps if the ground sloped slightly downward in the beginning, the very strongest might move the train (if there were only a few cars) a few inches. But to the top? I could not happen. This is Paul's point. You will never be saved by living the law because you cannot live it well enough. Only the grace of Christ, only by the power of Christ, only by faith in Christ, can we ever hope to reach the top. Thus, "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God . . . for the just shall live by faith" (Gal 3:11).

The purpose of the law was to be "our schoolmaster until Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24,25, JST).

Paul's desire was to set his converts free from the bondage and oppression

of the law. He might want to set us free as well. Many of us long for lists and definitions of the permissible activities on the Sabbath and in other areas of our religious life. “How much kissing is too much?” is a question I often ask members of my young adult ward. Can we put a number on that? “What must happen for you to get your home teaching done every month?” One visit? A meaningful phone call? A brief conversation in church? Paul warned these saints about the danger of these kinds of questions with this language:

But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years (Gal. 4:9,10).

We must walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, live in the Spirit, and enjoy the fruits of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:16, 18, 22-25).

CONCLUSION: Apostasy has not disappeared from among us. I have a letter in my possession written by a former colleague and Elders Quorum President. The letter contains a “revelation” calling me to the Quorum of the Twelve in *his* church, of which he is, according to his business card, “Prophet, Seer, and Revelator.” I have another friend, an associate of twenty years, who has turned from the sweetness of the revelations and living prophets back to the practice of polygamy. You all know of stories like these. They are tragic but they must be warnings to us to live in such a way and with such obedience that we can enjoy the companionship of the Holy Ghost, which will “show unto you all things what ye should do.” (2 Nephi 32:5).

Copyright © 2003 by Ted Gibbons <tedgibbons@yahoo.com>. All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced in any form or by any means for commercial gain without the express written consent of the author. Digital or printed copies may be freely made and distributed for personal and public non-commercial use.