

Call to Obedience # 414
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But None of These Things Move Me

by Reimar Schultze

And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 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. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more (Acts 20:22-25).

None of these things move me! These words were not only Paul's motto at his final farewell from his brethren at Ephesus, but they were the standard of his life. These words stand in stark contrast to the up's and down's, the in's and out's, the yes's and no's of today and tomorrow of many Christians. Too many of God's children are moved about with the ease and frequency of a leaf in the wind or a cloud in the sky.

People are moved in and out of churches, prayer meetings, and relationships by the slightest whims of discontent and hurt feelings. Pity on the pastor who is trying to please the diversity and multitude of human expectations of his parishioners to keep them in his flock. He will only wear himself out and lose the anointing.

God never calls a man to the ministry to please men, but to please God. The desires that men have as to what a minister ought to do, what he ought to attend to, and what he ought to be, will almost always run contrary to God's plans for His chosen ones.

Spirituality never satisfies carnality. There is no bending of these spiritual principles. The spiritual are contented with Christ and Christ alone. They need no pampering. Their root system is deep enough so as not to be moved from finishing their course with joy by anything whatsoever. They know that they cannot leave the church, the body of Christ: for to leave the body is also to leave the head who is Christ Himself. It is like basketball: if you leave the team because you are upset and exchange the basketball court for a hoop in your

driveway, you forfeit any chance of ever making basketball history. Remember, the moment Elijah separated himself from his servant, he became a loser.

There has never been any Christian in 2,000 years of church history who has made a notable contribution to the kingdom of God outside of the church. Outside of Christ's body, we do not exist and our witness has no validity. God never forsook Israel, even in her most adulterous, idolatrous and rebellious state. Jesus gave and continues to give Himself to the church AS IS!

The devil fights so terribly hard to get us out of the fellowship of the saints because Jesus works so hard to keep us in, to get us to oneness and to total submission to His will. Yes, hope for revival is still in us all becoming one.

Now let me list four reasons why Paul could easily have been moved away from the Lord and His church. Then, ask yourself whether you have any better reasons for quitting the body of Christ than he had.

1. Paul Had a Rough Conversion!

First, notice that on the road to Damascus, he was struck to the ground by a bright light. It almost scared him to death. Then he made an absolute surrender to God, which most Christians never make in a lifetime. *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* (Acts 9:6). And then he opened his eyes, and he could not find his horse.

I hear much about the prosperity theology: once you are saved, all will be well. And yet, Paul at his conversion was struck with blindness. Here was the first call of the devil telling him to quit because it was not worth it. However, Paul gave himself to three days of prayer and fasting. In those three days, he saw so much of this "great salvation" that it mattered not to him anymore whether he would ever see his horse again or not.

And because Paul became sweeter rather than bitter, at the end of those three days, he received his sight and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Now he had double vision, both physical and spiritual.

2. Paul's First Church Service in Jerusalem Was a Negative!

After Paul had preached in Damascus for a while, he sought out the Spirit-filled church in Jerusalem. Paul entered the "vestibule" of this church, gave his name and testimony, and was rejected. They thought he was a spy or an informer. That was Paul's first day in the Jerusalem church (Acts 9:26).

What would your response be under similar circumstances? Would it be time to write off the church as hypocritical or spiritually insensitive? Or would

you say like Paul: *But none of these things move me... I shall finish my course with joy...*, and “if I cannot get into the church through the front door, I will try to get into it through the back door?”

3. Paul Is Sent Back Home!

Barnabas recognized Paul’s experience with God as being genuine. He took him to the apostles and Paul was now accepted by the church. However, after Paul preached a little while in Jerusalem, it created a riot, and the Grecian Jews tried to kill him. To save Paul and to end the turmoil, the church sent him out of the country back to Tarsus where he was raised. This young convert was then separated from the body of Christ, living in isolation and supporting himself with tent making while he was preaching the gospel in his own land. Again, none of these things could move him from finishing his course.

And because Paul drew closer to Jesus in Tarsus rather than becoming resentful, God sent Barnabas there to bring him back to preach in Antioch, the place where Jesus’ disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:25-26). Barnabas seems to have been one of the very few who knew who Paul was and what he was really worth.

4. Barnabas Leaves Paul and the Money Dries Up!

Barnabas was the only man who had the diplomatic abilities and respect to keep the church behind Paul. You see, Paul had some unpopular habits, such as preaching too long (Acts 20:7-12) and expressing a complicated theology for some of the laymen, such that even Peter had trouble with Paul’s writings (2 Peter 3:16). Such men as Paul need gifted, influential helpers to keep the bridge open between them and the people. But in Acts 15:39, that bridge collapsed as a result of Barnabas leaving Paul; and from then on, most churches only gave lip service to Paul, and their offerings to him soon went down to zero. Oh, what a time to quit! What can you do without money?

Again, none of these things moved Paul. He, like Jesus, knew that the kingdom of God does not run on money, but on the power of God. So, yes, he often went hungry, cold and homeless from that time on (2 Cor. 11:27). He spent three years with the Ephesian churches, and on departing Ephesus, he says: *I have coveted no man’s silver... Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me* (Acts 20:33-34). He labored in the churches, and he labored in their homes (Acts 20:20), but he received no paycheck. Again, not only did he labor for his own necessities, but also for those who were with him.

When he left Ephesus, ...*they all wept sore, hung on his neck, and kissed him* (Acts 20:37). Yes, they loved him, but did not pay him. Paul should have been crying, and not them. Soon he had to write these tragic words: *This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me...* (2 Tim. 1:15); *...but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge* (2 Tim. 4:16).

Unpaid, unpopular, forsaken by most all and facing prison, never to leave it alive; but no, he cried not. Instead, he proclaims: *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* (Acts 20:24).

If there was any man that had reason to leave the church and to become critical, bitter, or resentful toward her, it was Paul. But no, he became sweeter, more and more Christ-like and immovable for her cause. Because of his response, we today have 13 books in the Bible we otherwise would not have had: 13 books that have pointed millions to the cross to find Christ over these past nearly 2,000 years.

Oh, what has been the loss to the church of the millions who have allowed themselves to be separated from her by giving over to resentment, criticism and hurt feelings? Dear friends, it is not worth it; it is not worth it for anything to allow ourselves to be driven out of God's will, to leave the course He has set before us, not succumbing to the difficulties, but subduing them! Stick with the church and if nobody lives it, you live it! If you do, you will be like Paul leaving behind an echo that will reverberate to God's glory in generations to come.

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