

SIX STUBBORN STATEMENTS

ACTS 20:26-27 • TV-413A

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By

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Acts 20:26-27

“Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

The apostle Paul whom God sent to minister to the Gentiles knew that his ministry was coming to a close. The Spirit of God had revealed to him and to many of his friends that he would soon put off this flesh and go to be with the Lord.

You remember he wrote to Timothy and he said; *“The time of my departure is at hand. I fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I’ve kept the faith.”* In other words, Paul is saying to Timothy, “The end is near.”

And it was long about this time that he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus. It’s recorded in **Acts chapter 20**, if you want to turn in your Bibles and follow as I read this Scripture.

The apostle Paul sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus. And when they came to him and gathered about him, he’s speaking to them for the last time. This is the last time he said they’d ever see his face and the last time that he would ever preach to them.

And he sort of summed up his ministry among them and these are the words that he used. Look if you will at **Acts 20:19**; Paul says: *“I have served the Lord with all humility of mind.”*

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Now this is not just rhetoric, but the apostle Paul knew and felt and confessed that he was not worthy to be an apostle. He said that several times; *“I am not worthy to be an apostle. I obtained mercy.”*

And then again, he said, *“I am lest than the least of all the saints.”* He meant this; he felt this. He said, *“I’m the chief of sinners. Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.”*

And time and again he said; *“I’m nothing, I’m nothing. I know it. I feel it. I am what I am by the grace of God.”* He said actually; *“I labored more abundantly than all the apostles but yet, not I, but the grace of God (and the Spirit of God) in me.”* So that’s what he says in **verse 19**: *“I’ve served the Lord with all humility of mind.”*

And then look at **verse 20**; note this carefully: *“I have kept back nothing that was profitable to you. Now, I’ve kept back nothing. I’ve told you everything that God has taught me and everything God has been pleased to reveal to me I’ve passed it onto you.”*

Like he said in **1 Corinthians 11**; *“What I’ve received of the Lord I delivered to you and I haven’t kept back anything, not out of desire for personal gain or personal glory; that has not influenced my ministry. I’m not seeking gain and glory.”*

And he said; *“Neither out of fear nor covetousness. Fear has not caused me to hold back anything. I’ve boldly, with much boldness, preached to you the Gospel of God’s grace. So, I’ve kept back nothing. What God has shown me I have passed it onto you.”*

And then look down at **verse 27**. I’ll skip a few verses and go to **verse 27**. He said, (now watch this) *“I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God, (all that I know).”*

Now Paul didn’t know everything that almighty God decreed and purposed, *“But all the counsel of God which God has taught me “I have not shunned to declare it unto you.”*

Now; the apostle Paul didn’t try to explain the glorious and mysterious God. He didn’t try to reconcile the purpose and counsel of God with the thoughts of men. He just declared it unto them. He didn’t explain the counsel of God. He didn’t say; *“I’ve not shunned to explain to you the counsel of God.”* He said, *“I have declared it.”*

“I’ve declared His truth, not explained it, I’ve preached it. I have declared His Gospel. I have declared the glory of His grace in Christ Jesus. What God has shown me, what God has taught me, what God has revealed to me; I’ve not shunned to declare it unto you.”

Now this ought to be the determination of every servant of God, if he is a servant of God. God didn’t send us to explain Him or to bring Him down to man’s understanding. We’re to preach what He says in His Word, preach what He’s declared in His Word, just preach all the counsel of God.

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And my friends, this has been and is, and I trust will always be my only concern, my determination, to tell men the truth about God, to compromise nothing, to hold back nothing, to boldly declare the truth about God, the truth about ourselves. Let's tell the truth about ourselves.

And let's tell the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth about salvation. It doesn't help men or profit men to hold back something because we fear that they'll not like it or not receive it. Paul said; "If I'm the servant of men then I can't be the servant of God. I can't please men and God."

I have no power to make men believe what I preach or even to believe God; that's the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is sent to reveal the truth of God to the heart. Only the Holy Spirit can convince a man of sin.

Only the Holy Spirit can reveal Christ to a sinner's heart. Only the Holy Spirit can bring men to faith in Jesus Christ. I can't do that. I'm a messenger. I'm a messenger sent to preach a message, to declare a truth.

Our Lord said in **John**; listen to this; it's not the preacher's responsibility to reveal the Gospel; it's the preacher's responsibility to preach the Gospel. It's the Holy Spirit's work to reveal the Gospel."

Listen to what our Lord said in **John 6:44**; "*No man can come to me except the Father which has sent me draw him.*" And He says: "*And they shall all be taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me.*"

Now men are not going to hear and they're not going to learn and they're not going to come to Christ if we don't preach the truth as it's revealed in God's Word. Listen, He said in **Ephesians 1:13**; "*In whom you trusted after you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.*"

So, we're to preach the truth about God and the truth about men and the truth about Christ and the truth about salvation, not explain it, not try to reveal it, but preach it and leave it to the Holy Spirit to enable men to hear and to learn and to come to God.

And this is why Paul declared; "*I kept back nothing profitable unto you. I've not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*"

And how people respond to the truth of God is between them and God. And I say that to you. When I preach what God says in His Word, how you respond to it; that's not between you and me, that's between you and God.

It's required of a servant, not that he be successful, but that he be faithful. God judges His servants, His stewards, not based on their success, but of their faithfulness.

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Do you remember when He spoke to the servant; He said; *“Well done thou good and faithful servant? Thou hast been faithful over a few things. I’ll make thee ruler over many. Enter into the joy of thy Lord.”*

There’s nothing said about success. There’s nothing said about numbers. There was nothing said about accomplishments. The whole basis of this judgment was faithfulness. And that’s our business as preachers, as pastors, as servants of God; it’s to be faithful, faithful to God, first of all.

And I’ll tell you, if we’re faithful to God we’ll be faithful to men. Our business is not, first of all, being faithful to men; it’s being faithful to God and to His Word. And doing that, then, we’ll be faithful to our hearers because if a man pleases God he will be a blessing to God’s people.

Over 40 years ago I was brought to face six stubborn statements. Now that’s the title of this message: **“SIX STUBBORN STATEMENTS.”**

Over 40 years ago I was brought to face these six stubborn statements, the truth of God’s Word, the truth as it’s revealed in God’s Word. Someone said one time; “When a man is confronted, he must do one of two things: He must believe it or reject it. He must receive it or turn from it. He must preach it or deny it. There’s no middle ground. If it is true, it must be believed, or it must be rejected. It must be received or denied. It must be preached or else denied.”

And so, I’m going to confront you with these six statements. I want you to listen to them.

If you want to, write them down. Take down these Scriptures. Write to me. Let me send you this tape so you can study it some more. But here are these six stubborn statements and they’ve got to be handled, they’ve got to be dealt with. I had to face it and you’re going to have to face it.

First of all: God almighty is sovereign! He’s absolutely all-powerful, almighty, and sovereign in all things or He isn’t. He can’t be both now.

I hear preachers talking about God trying to save men. I hear them saying all the time: “God’s trying to save you.” I hear them talking about God wanting to do this; “God wants you to do this and God wants you to do that but men won’t let Him.” I hear them saying that “God has a wonderful plan for your life, but you won’t let Him accomplish it.”

Just recently I listened to two preachers, one right after the other. And one of them said; “Give God a chance, give God an opportunity to help you, give God an opportunity to save you, give God an opportunity.”

And I thought what kind of God is this? What kind of God is he talking about, a God that’s impotent? The word God and impotence doesn’t go together. A God that’s powerless? The name God and powerless doesn’t go together.

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The name God and power, the name God and might, God and strength, God and sovereignty, God who rules over all. God is almighty. What kind of God is this that wants to do something and can't do it; that wills to do it and can't do it; that has a wonderful plan that He wants to put in operation and the very creatures that He made himself won't let Him?

That's no God at all! And that's not the God of the Bible. And that's the reason I'm saying that you have to make up your mind on this. The God of the Bible is sovereign, almighty, and all-powerful, who does what He will, when He will, and with whom He will or He's not God at all, somebody else's God.

You see, the Scriptures teach that God is sovereign. Now that word means that, the meaning is in the word, He reigns; God is sovereign.

He's almighty in creation. With whom did He take counsel when He created the world? He created all things by His power. He created all things for His glory. He created all things as it pleased Him.

God is sovereign in providence. The Word of God declares over and over again; *"He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, whatsoever the Lord pleased; that's what He did, in heaven, in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."*

Our Lord said; *"Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your heavenly Father."* He said; *"I have spoken, I'll bring it to pass."* He said; *"I've purposed it, I'll do it."*

Read **Isaiah 45** and **Isaiah 46**; God is sovereign in providence. He rules, He reigns. He knows the thoughts of men. He directs the thoughts of men.

And God is sovereign in salvation. He's almighty in salvation. *"He quickeneth whom He will."* I'm going to preach on this next week; *"Salvation is of the Lord, from Alpha to Omega; from beginning to end, it's of the Lord."* It's by the power of God.

He lifts the beggar from the dunghill. He washes him in His blood. He seats him on the throne among princes.

Moses said to the Lord one day; *"Lord, show me your glory, (show me your glory, your greatest glory)."* And God said, *"Moses; get there in the cleft of the rock and I'll put my hand over you and I'll pass by you and I'll reveal the name of the Lord to you."*

Here it is; *"I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious."* God says; *"My arm's not short that I cannot save."*

Let me ask you something now. *"Let's reason together,"* Isaiah said. Do you really think that there's a sinner whom an almighty, sovereign, powerful God, wills to save, wants to save, and can't do it? Now do you really think such a thing could possibly exist?

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He was able to save Saul of Tarsus. He made him willing. He was able to save Noah. *“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”* He was able to save Abraham. Abraham was 75 years old when he met God, living in an idolatrous, heathen, pagan, land and God called his name and told him to get out of that land.

Now I’m telling you this, *“God is able.”* And that’s the basis of Abraham’s faith. *“He believed that God was able to do all that He promised.”* Now that’s the basis of true saving faith and that’s Abraham’s faith.

And you check **Romans chapter 4**. We better read **Romans chapter 4**. That’s the story of Abraham’s faith. And the very basis of Abraham’s faith was not just that he believed in God, but he believed in the God who was *“able to do all that He promised.”*

Is that your God? If it’s not you are one of the children of a lesser God. And I don’t want a lesser God; I want a greater God, an almighty God, a sovereign God, a ruling God, because that’s the only kind of God there is. Let God be God.

And I don’t understand this kind of talk that God wants to do this and you won’t let Him, God wills to do something and you won’t let Him. God desires and God makes plans and men bust them all to pieces; that’s not the God of creation. And we’ll find that out some day. But why not find it out now: *“Let God be true (the true God) and everybody else a liar.”*

A man got disturbed one Sunday listening to me on television because I pointed at him when I was on the screen. He tuned into the program and I pointed at him and I said; “We got one thing in common, you and me; you’re a sinner and I’m a sinner.”

And he got upset, not because I called myself a sinner; he could agree with that. He got upset because I called him a sinner.

Secondly: Let me tell you something now; listen, men are sinners; they are fallen creatures in Adam. *“They’re dead in trespasses and sin”* or they’re not dead at all!

I hear preachers say; “Well, God’s done all He can do; now it’s up to you.” What kind of talk is that, “It’s up to you?” Up to a dead man to give himself life? Up to a dead man to born himself? How are you going to born yourself again into the kingdom of God?

Up to a dead man to hear? Up to a dead man to see? Up to a dead man to walk? You say, “What do you mean dead men?” We’re dead spiritually by nature, by birth. The Scripture says, *“In Adam all die, in Adam all die.”*

The Scripture says; *“By one man sin entered this world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men. And you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin.”*

I tell you my friend, “Sinners need to be, have to be, quickened from the dead, born of the Spirit of God. They have to be operated on by God’s almighty, powerful and mysterious Holy Spirit.”

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That's what our Lord said to Nicodemus, He said; *"You must be born again."* And Nicodemus said; *"Well how am I going to be born again, enter my mother's womb and be born?"* He said, *"That which is born of the flesh is flesh."* But He said, *"That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, (born of the Holy Spirit and of the Word)."*

And it's like the wind. *"The wind bloweth where it listeth and you hear the sound (and you see the results) but you can't tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth, even so, they that are born of the Spirit of God."*

The Spirit of God is sovereign. *"He will quicken whom He will."* He'll call whom He will. He'll make alive whom He will, but it has to be a divine operation. There's got to be an effectual call.

There's got to be a divine operation in which God almighty gives life to the dead so that they can hear, so that they can see, and so they can believe it, believe the Gospel.

Our Lord said in **John 5**: *"The hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live."* You say, "That's talking about people in the grave." No, it's not either because in two verses later He said;

"And the hour is coming when they that are in the graves also shall hear the voice of the Son of God and live." But this is dead sinners who hear the voice of the Son of God, the voice of the Spirit of God.

And I know when you mention the word election a lot of folks just get uptight and upset. But the word election is in the Bible over and over and over again. About 26 times the word elect, elected, or election is in the Bible.

And what I'm saying is this:

Thirdly: God elected a people to salvation or He didn't! Now which is it, He did or He didn't? The Scriptures declare that He did. The Scripture says that; God elected a people before the foundation of the world, in Christ, and gave them to His Son to redeem and bring to glory.

Now listen to these Scriptures; *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places according to the good pleasure of His will."* He chose us to salvation before the foundation of the world. God chose us before the foundation of the world, *"That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."*

In **Romans 8:29** the Scripture says; *"Whom He did foreknow, them He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. And whom He predestinated He called. Whom He called He justified and whom He justified He glorified."*

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Paul wrote to the **Thessalonians** and said in **chapter 2:13**; he said, *“I’m bound to give thanks to God for you brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”*

My friends; Christ our Lord prayed that in His high priestly prayer. He said; *“Father; thou hast given me authority over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me.”* And then in **John 6** He said; *“All that my Father giveth me shall come to me. And them that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”*

I ask you this, did you love God, or did He love you? The Scripture says; *“We love Him because He first loved us.”* Did you call God, or did God call you? Did you choose God, or did God choose you? Well when did God choose you? Well why did God choose you? The Scripture says; *“He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world according to the good pleasure of His own will.”* God elected a people. Heaven will be populated by a people conformed to the image of Christ Jesus.

Fourthly: When our Lord died on the cross, when He died on the cross, did He fully and freely and completely justify us before God?

Did He pay for all our sins? When Christ died on that cross; did He pay for our sins? Did His blood provide a ransom? Did He bring us to God so that when judgment passes by God can say; *“When I see the blood I’ll pass over you?”* Did He or did He not?

Well, some people preach that Jesus Christ died in the same way, to the same extent, for every son of Adam, for the whole world, for people in heaven and people in hell. But my friend; I’m not arguing the extent of the atonement. I’ll leave that to someone else.

What I’m arguing is this, the power of the atonement, the power of the atonement. If His blood was shed for all men then His blood failed. If His blood was shed for people who perish then His blood failed.

And yet the song of those who are redeemed in heaven is this; *“Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.”* The blood of Christ is effectual. The blood of Christ is effectual.

In the blood of Christ, you have an atonement that atones. You have a ransom that is effectual. You have a redemption that redeems. The Scripture says; *“He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God.”* And He gets the job done.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says this; *“He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”* And our Lord said, *“I lay down my life for the sheep.”*

Yes; if Jesus Christ died on that cross and bore our sins and effectually paid for them and put them away and His blood is a ransom, an effectual mercy seat and atonement, propitiation, then that blood was not shed for people who perish.

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It was shed for believers. He died for believers. He died for the elect. He died for the people of God. *“Other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice and they shall be one fold.”*

I’m saying that the blood of Christ is effectual, it’s powerful, it saves. Just like in Egypt; the blood was not on every door. If the blood had been on every door then there would have been no death in the land of Egypt. There was no death where the blood was on the door.

And my friends, where Christ’s blood has been shed for a sinner there’s no judgment, there’s no condemnation. *“There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ.”*

Fifthly: The Holy Spirit; does He actually quicken, regenerate all men, or just God’s elect?

Does He try to save people and can’t? Does He try to call men to Christ and fail? The Scripture doesn’t say that. The Scripture tells us; *“You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sin. And thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.”*

“It’s not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord.” The living God cannot fail to accomplish what He sets out to do.

Now here’s what men do not understand; there’s a general call when the Word is preached, when God’s judgments comes, when God’s providence is inactive, when the law is read, there’s a general call that all men hear.

But my friend; the Holy Spirit gives an effectual call. The Holy Spirit gives a life giving call. The Holy Spirit brings the seed of the Word and begets life. And that regeneration and that quickening is effectual and powerful. He doesn’t try to quicken men, He quickens them.

Now last of all and I close; all of God’s people; will they persevere, will they continue in the faith, will they be glorified or will some be lost?

The Scripture says; *“He that hath begun a good work shall complete it in the day of Jesus Christ!”*