



Supernatural leadership

Credit – Greg Heasley

INTRODUCTION (SUPERNATURAL)

Good morning church. December has arrived and we are into the Christmas Season! The church staff had a lot of fun setting out all the Christmas decorations this week – hope you like it! Tis the season to be jolly!

And today is the final part of the Supernatural Series... Unfortunately there is so much more that I would have liked to have covered in the book of Acts... but we planned it this way... and knew all along that we needed to wrap up today to prepare for our Christmas Series which will be launching soon. More about that to follow!

But I trust that you have found the Supernatural Series encouraging... and challenging! This morning we wrap it up with a message that I feel is a fitting end to the series. Acts 20 – Paul's Farewell Speech.

PAULS FAREWELL (ACTS 20:13-38)

Let me give you a bit of a context to this... so that you have a better idea of what's going on before I read through the passage. This section in Acts is regarded by the theologians as one of the most special passages in scripture... right up there with the Apostle Paul's 1 Corinthians 13 passage on love... because it also carries a message of love... the special bond between Paul and the leaders in Ephesus.

It records Paul's famous final words to the Ephesian elders. He has been with them for three years... and it is filled with emotion... because Paul is convinced that he is never going to see these guys again. That's why it's known as the farewell speech. Paul is heading to Jerusalem, but he has this sense that it's going to be rough... and that he is even going to be martyred for his faith.

I could not help but think of the connection to the whole situation with the young missionary... John Allen Chau... who was killed last week on North Sentinel Island. I know that there is a lot of controversy over the whole thing... but from my perspective... he went there to share the gospel of Jesus with people who did not know the good news of Jesus – and he certainly knew the possibility of dying for that was very real – and that's exactly what ended up happening.

And so we find Paul is in a similar kind of situation. He's got this sense that this journey is going to get rough – and so it's in this context that he is going to share his farewell speech with these leaders!

So let me ask you – what would you say in your final farewell speech?

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY IN YOUR FINAL FAREWELL SPEECH?

Stuart Philips our Youth Director had his final farewell at Youth on Friday night. And it never went quite as planned! During a youth game he tripped and fell, and dislocated his shoulder! I spent Stuart's farewell in the back of an ambulance with him and in the ER room at Victoria Hospital at midnight. Everyone said he went out with a bang! He never got the chance to give his farewell speech at youth – so he's going to get that opportunity next Sunday night! Hope lots of you can make it!

But think about it - Your last farewell – your last opportunity. Your last big moment! You gather all your significant friends together – the leaders – what are you going to say to them?? What's the thing you want to leave with them?? What's the most important deposit you can make??

So what you're going to see here... is that Paul is going to share with them some leadership characteristics. Some hugely important principles and qualities that he believes will help them after he is gone. So today's message is called;

“SUPERNATURAL LEADERSHIP”

Now at this point... some of you might switch off and think to yourselves, “*Oh... leadership... this one's not for me, I'm not a leader.*” Think again. Leadership is important to all of us. Maybe you're a parent? Guess what! You're a leader. Maybe you've got some friends at school who like hanging out with you? Guess what! You're a leader.

It doesn't matter if you're just trying to lead yourself, or you're leading others. You've got to know how to lead! Especially as a believer. Leadership is influence - and as followers of Jesus – we are all meant to be having an influence on people around us all the time.

And as I am sure you've noticed... our world is in a bit of a leadership crisis at the moment! Never mind what's happening internationally, just think about our country. We have some funky things going on, right??!!!

So leadership is crucial... even if it's just your home... Leadership is essential, and what we find here in this passage... is some wonderful leadership qualities and principles.

So let's get right into it. We will move through the passage... in little bite sized chunks.

Let's look at the first part from verse 13-16;

ACTS 20:13-16

We went on ahead to the ship... and sailed for Assos... where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement... because he was going there on foot. ¹⁴ When he met us at Assos... we took him aboard... and went on to Mitylene.

¹⁵ The next day... we set sail from there... and arrived off Chios. The day after that... we crossed over to Samos... and on the following day... arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶ Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus... to avoid spending time in the province of Asia... for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem... if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

So let me say a few things here. Paul is heading to Jerusalem. Paul is in a hurry to reach Jerusalem! He has set his face toward Jerusalem. It reminds us a lot about Jesus, doesn't it? The same way he set his face toward Jerusalem. And so here's the thing I want to share here...

1) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS KEEP FOCUSED ON WHAT THEY ARE CALLED TO DO (VS 16)

How many of you know... Keeping focus can be hard??!!! It's hard enough trying to keep focused on our own stuff... but when we are called to lead... we have the added pressure of keeping focused on the big picture vision that God has called us to do. And for Paul... there were so many people who needed to hear about Jesus! It must have been so overwhelming. His task must have seemed too big for just one person.

As Tristan shared a few weeks ago when looking at Supernatural Calling – God has a specific call for your life. And I want you to understand, you are not capable of doing everything! You can't fix every problem. You can't help every person on the planet. But you can do what God has called you to do. You can influence who God has put in front of you. Like that old story about all the starfish on the beach, you can't save every starfish... but you are called to the ones that God has called you to.

Paul realised this... and so he even avoided going into Ephesus and the Province of Asia... because he knew that he would become distracted... and he knew that he had to get to Jerusalem! He was not going to let himself become side-tracked... he knew what God had called him to do... and he would remain focused on that.

What about you? Do you know what God has called you to do? Are you doing it? Or have you become distracted? Supernatural leaders keep focussed on what they are called to do.

Paul loved the church at Ephesus, but he knew that if he stayed there he would end up getting sucked into things that were not his core calling... I can relate! In Ephesus there were just so many issues and challenges... but God had called other people to see to those... so instead... Paul went to the port of Miletus... and sent for just the elders to come to him. You see this in the next part from verse 17;

ACTS 20:17-18

From Miletus... Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ When they arrived... he said to them: “You know how I lived... the whole time I was with you...”

Paul begins here by calling for the elders. He gathers the team. He is in Miletus, and he says; *“Please come guys. I want one more session with you all! Let’s get together one last time, I’ve got some important things to say.”*

Wow. Can you imagine being invited to a session with the great Apostle Paul?! It’s amazing. He says, *“Come on guys, let’s have one last session in Miletus!”*

And when they arrive, Paul says to them... my brothers, **“You know how I lived the whole time I was with you!”**

If you’re taking notes don’t miss this one...

2) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS LEAD BY EXAMPLE (VS 18)

Church, when we look at the life of the Apostle Paul... we see that he was not just a great leader because of the stuff he knew... and let’s face it... he knew a lot! He was the author of the incredible book to the Roman’s... one of the most meaty and solid theological books we have. But Paul was not just a great leader just because of what he knew... he was a great leader because of what how he lived out what he knew. Amen?!

This is what makes an outstanding leader. He was a example. An example.

Think about it... that’s what shows up bad leaders, right? Think for a moment about certain politicians... Politicians are great at saying one thing and doing ... (another!) Right! Where’s the example?

You want to know what makes a great leader? Someone who says something, and then backs it up with action. Credibility. Credibility in what you say and do. Walking the walk. Living the talk. Doing the stuff. Showing something to others... by letting them follow... in your.. own.. footsteps. This is something Paul understood about leadership. Supernatural leaders lead by example.

He said to them, *“You know my life... You know my habits... you know my ways.”*

So friends... we’re all leaders in one way or another... what kind of an example have you been setting? Food for thought.

But let's read on.. Paul says this in verse 18... brothers...

ACTS 20:18-19

... from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility... and with tears... and in the midst of severe testing... by the plots of my Jewish opponents.

Paul says... from the first day... you've seen how I've lived... and then he says; *"I served the Lord... with great humility... and with tears... in the midst of severe testing."* Phew, seriously tough stuff Paul went through.

But he went through it all... with his credibility in check... and in "great humility." So that's the next point here;

3) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS WALK IN GREAT HUMILITY (VS 19)

Humility is a leadership quality that stands out.

Paul could have got a big head so easily. He was a strong leader. God used him in mighty ways all the time. Huge miracles were the norm in his ministry. Paul was a big guy in terms of influence. He summoned the Ephesian elders to come – and they came! Never mind that it was a 80 km trip for them. This was Paul!

Yet although Paul was a big significant guy... he was also a servant – he served with humility and the Ephesians had seen it. They knew how he had lived his life. They were witnesses of it. And it's one of the reasons they respected him and followed him.

You see friend... when you lead with your whole life... not just in what you say... People follow. Because contrary to what many people may think. It's not hard to spot a fake. I learnt a long time ago in youth ministry that young people can spot a phony a mile off.

People don't just listen to your words... they study your actions as well. People are great at spotting hypocrisy – if your life does not match your words then your leadership is a flop... and your message is discredited.

But with the Holy Spirit's help... you can live a life that honours God – it does not mean that you have to be perfect... but that people can see how you try to walk with God... and how you humbly own up when you mess up.

Let's continue... Paul says in verse 20...

ACTS 20:20-21

You know... that I have not hesitated... to preach anything that would be helpful to you... but have taught you publicly... and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews... and Greeks... that they must turn to God in repentance... and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

Here's what jumps out at me...

4) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS DON'T DISCRIMINATE (VS 20-21)

Paul taught the Jew's and the Gentiles. There is this funny idea out there today that Paul was just for the Gentiles, that's not accurate. Yes he often hit the synagogue first when he arrived in a new town... But Paul preached to anybody! He did not discriminate. He did not have favourites.

Paul also reminded the Ephesian elders that when he was with them he taught them publicly and consistently – he declared the same message to everyone. Nothing was done in secret. It was for everyone. Why was 'publicly' important to Paul? Well, Ephesus had been an interesting place for mission work!

- It was in Ephesus that Apollos was discipled and trained (Acts 18:24-27).
- It was in Ephesus that the sick were healed by Paul's old handkerchiefs and aprons (Acts 19:12).
- It was in Ephesus that the seven sons of Sceva lost a punch up with a demon possessed man (Acts 19:13-17).
- It was in Ephesus that a massive pile of magic books were burnt (Acts 19:19).
- It was in Ephesus that Demetrius started a massive uproar as thousands protested at the declining influence of Artemis... and decline in the trade of silver idols... because of the growth of the church!

Lots of crazy stuff was going on in Ephesus! We also learn from Paul's letters to Timothy while he was there... that they had a problem of false teaching

To the church in Ephesus... Paul says; *"I taught you openly everything you needed to know. I did not hide anything, I did not have secret teaching or special teaching. There was no difference in what I taught to Jews or Gentiles – I was consistent."*

Verse 22...

ACTS 20:22-24

"And now... compelled by the Spirit (Love that! Compelled by the Spirit. When last where you compelled by the Spirit!) **I am going to Jerusalem... not knowing what will happen to me there.** ²³ **I only know that in every city... the Holy Spirit warns me... that prison and hardships are facing me.** ²⁴ **However, I consider my life worth nothing to me... my only aim... is to finish the race... and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me... the task of testifying... to the good news of God's grace.**

Next point;

5) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS DON'T CARE IF THEY ARE REMEMBERED – ONLY JESUS (VS 24)

Paul says... I consider my life worth nothing to me... He says you know how I lived among you. I served the Lord with humility. I'm not here to make a name for myself. I never came here to start a new ministry called "The Apostle Paul International Ministries!" I only want to finish the race God has given me... and make His name

known. It reminds me of a song I have been listening to this week by Casting Crowns. The chorus says;

“And I... I don’t want to leave a legacy...I don’t care if they remember me... Only Jesus... And I... I’ve only got one life to live... I’ll let every second point to Him... Only Jesus.” © 2018 Be Essential Songs

God had warned Paul that he would face tough times... yet the task given to him was worth risking his life for. We looked at God’s calling a few weeks ago – did you know... that God does not always call us to a life of easiness and perpetual blessing... but sometimes... he calls people to suffer... and to even die for him?

Suffering and hardships are not avoidable if you obey God. Too often we have thought that if we face hardship it is because God does not love us... but in fact if we obey God... we may even face tough times because God has a task for us to do.

The next words of Paul in verse 25 onwards are sobering;

ACTS 20:25-27

“Now I know that none of you... among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom... will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today... that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you... the whole will of God.

Paul starts getting real serious now... and he tells them; *“Guys... I’ve shared everything with you. Whatever happens from here on out... it’s on you! I held nothing back in sharing with you the whole will of God.”*

Next point;

6) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS DON’T HOLD BACK IN SHARING THE GOSPEL (VS 27)

The Apostle Paul did not shrink back from declaring the whole truth. Which considering the circumstances, was not easy. Things at the Ephesian church were not going well with the divisions over false teaching. Paul though, says, *“I’ve got a clear conscience about this.”* In other words, there is nothing more that he could have taught them. There was no part of God’s message that he did not share. He used every opportunity – he had no regrets. No regrets. What about you?

Friends, our responsibility is to be the messenger... We are not responsible for people’s reactions when we share the gospel – some will accept and some will reject... but we are called to faithfully and continually share... making the most of every opportunity.

Make sure you don’t have regrets of what you should have said to someone about Jesus – like Paul, you don’t know when it will be your last opportunity.

Paul goes on...vs 28

ACTS 20:28-31

Keep watch over yourselves... and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers... Be shepherds of the church of God... which he bought with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after I leave... savage wolves will come in among you... and will not spare the flock.

³⁰ Even from your own number... men will arise and distort the truth... in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years... I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

7) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS ARE DISCERNING (WATCHFUL)

Paul is handing over responsibility here of the church to the elders – the Holy Spirit has called them to lead and serve the church in Ephesus – they now need to need to step up into their calling. But it will not be easy – Paul has struggled with this church – they are complicated! They face false teaching from inside and outside... so the leaders will need to be wise and watchful. Paul says, “There will be wolves. Be good shepherds of the flock.”

Friends, I want to tell you. It is not an easy calling to lead in a church – the last two years have been filled with great highs... and deep lows. Pastoral leadership for me is so not what I thought it would be when I left seminary! Leadership is about helping people. Serving people. It’s about serving people in tough situations... among people who often mean well... but mess up...

And you have to be discerning. Sometimes the problems come from the outside... and sometimes they come from within. Please pray that our leadership would be discerning and watchful. The times in which we live are getting more and more tricky to navigate.

And now Paul last words to them:

ACTS 20:32-35

“Now I commit you to God... and to the word of his grace... which can build you up... and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing.

³⁴ You yourselves know... that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did... I showed you that by this kind of hard work... we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

8) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS WORK HARD (VS 32-35)

If you are not willing to work hard... well... let’s just say you will never become an exceptional leader. Paul was not lazy. Paul had an incredible work ethic. Paul was willing to get stuck in... to use his hands... he was not an executive director stuck in his ivory tower expecting others to do the hard work. Verse 31 says; **³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak,**

remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Paul worked hard and lived out his life before them with honesty and integrity. With these words Paul passed the mantle of leadership firmly to the elders... for he would not be there to help them anymore – God had other plans for him.

Paul challenged them to lead like he did – in a self-sacrificial way, not a self-serving way.

And then the last few verses... Verse 36;

ACTS 20:36-38

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking... he knelt down with all of them... and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him... and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most... was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Here's what I see here...

9) SUPERNATURAL LEADERS ARE RELATIONAL (VS 36-38)

What stands out for me here is Paul's leadership style. It was not authoritarian. He was not a dictator. He was strong, yes, but he was also relational. You know what church? Relationships matter. The way you do things with people - it matters.

Here in these verses... Paul gets down on his knees with the guys. And they cry together. They hug. They weep. They kissed him. They pray. They accompany him to the ship. It reminds me of that scene in the Lord of the rings. You get this sense that these guys really, really loved each other. Right?

It was not like a airport scene where you drop your boss off at the stop-and-go and shake his hand and say; "Cheers!" No! Here we got tears. We got hugs. We got comforting. There's this sense of brotherhood.

Paul, as the leader of the mission, was one of them. He was one of them. A brother. Not a untouchable, high and mighty man of God who no one was allowed to get to close to. No. There's closeness, there's friendship, there's intimacy. He is an apostle, their Pastor, but he is also their friend. Supernatural leaders are relational.

CONCLUSION

So church... what kind of leaders will we be? I want to encourage you.

- Keep focused on God's calling
- Lead by example
- Walk in humility
- Don't discriminate
- Make your life about Jesus – not your personal legacy
- Don't shrink back from sharing the whole truth
- Be discerning and watchful

- Be relational

As we end the book of Acts – we have seen the wonderful testimony of people... whose lives were changed by God's call on their lives. People who were equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit. People who shared the gospel no matter the consequences. And so as we end our series – here is my question to you - Will you walk supernaturally like they did?

Let's pray together.

PRAYER

We are going to share communion together now as a church family. Just before we do that we have some church family matters to attend to.

WELCOME INTO MEMBERSHIP

We have some folk to welcome into membership! So I am going to call Bastiaan Remmelzwaal and Kyle Drescher forward now. Ian, you can come forward as well.

Both Bastiaan and Kyle have been accepted as new church members. So we want to take a moment to share a scripture with each of them.

Kyle asked me to share one with him, and I thought I would share with you the same verse I preached on a few moments ago from Paul;

ACTS 20:24

I consider my life worth nothing to me... my only aim... is to finish the race... and complete the task... the Lord Jesus has given me... the task of testifying... to the good news of God's grace.

I pray that your life would be all about Jesus Kyle. God bless you, and welcome into membership!

Ian, I believe that you have a verse for Bastiaan... Welcome into membership Bastiaan! Let's give them a hand church.

Thank you guys – you can be seated.

I also wanted to remind you to be in prayer for Pastor Alan, he starts his Chemo on Tuesday. Also pray for Trevor Gray, Jo Gordon, Doug Jennings, Donald MacLean, Dave Hill, as well as Pieter and Jessica Van Staden. Let's pray for them, as well as prepare our hearts for communion.

PRAYER FOR SICK & COMMUNION

INSTRUCTION

Folks, you will see that there are four tables laid out with communion. If you're a visitor, please don't feel under any obligation to participate, but you are welcome to, this is something we as believers do, it helps us to remember what our Saviour Jesus did for us on the cross. Sino and the team are going to lead us in a song, and

as soon as you are ready, make your way to one of the tables, and serve one another.