Series: Unstoppable (Part 33)
Speaker: Charles Lim

INTRODUCTION

In this week's instalment of the Unstoppable series, we look at Paul's final message to the elders of the church of Ephesus whom he did not expect to ever see again (Acts 20:17-38). From Paul's message to the elders, we distil the following essentials of leadership:

1. Accountability and an open life (Acts 20:18)
2. Humility (Acts 20:19)
3. Expectation of hardship and suffering (Acts 20:19, 23)
4. Courage (Acts 20:20)
5. Untainted motivation, rather than selfish ambition (Acts 20:20)
6. Willingness to preach the whole gospel (Acts 20:27-28)
7. Care for one's own spiritual condition first (Acts 20:28)
8. And then, care for the Church (Acts 20:28)
9. Alertness against false teachings and teachers (Acts 20:27-28)
10. Faithfulness (Acts 20:26, 31)
11. Avoidance of covetousness and greed (Acts 20:33-35)
12. Diligence and generosity in giving (Acts 20:35)

Amongst the many lessons we can draw from this passage, let us focus on Paul's exhortation for leaders to pay attention to their own spiritual condition before - and in order that - they can tend to the persons under their care.

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." - Acts 20:28 ESV

DISCUSSION

1. It has been said that there is just one question a church leader needs to ask in order to gauge the spiritual health of their community:

   How has your "quiet time" been?

2. In recent years, "self-care" has been a buzz word in the health industry, but the Bible did it first. What might the difference be between the "self-care" of our world and that of the Bible?

   a. In 1 Timothy 4:16, Paul similarly calls Timothy to pay careful attention to himself, as he leads others. Noting verses 12-15 as the immediate context of the verse, what might "self-care" look like here? What is its power, and why?

      i. Notice that Paul's instruction to the Ephesians to pay careful attention to themselves is located within a passage warning about and predicting the effects of false teaching in the church (Acts 20:26, 29-30). How do we care for our own spiritual condition, that we might protect ourselves from the same dangers?

   b. In Acts 20:22-24, Paul describes himself as being "compelled" (NIV/CSB), "constrained" (ESV), or "bound" (KJV/NASB/NLT) by the Holy Spirit in what he does, so much so that he views his life as worth nothing. Is Paul's "self-care" care for himself? Why or why not? And what might it mean for us today?

   c. From what has been discussed, what is the aim of Biblical "self-care"? And how well are we doing it?

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

If we think of the fuel in our tank as being only for our own use, in all likelihood we would only top up the amount of fuel we need to get from point A to point B on our own journey. However, as God's vessels, we are called to pour out the love we receive from God to all around us.

The right doctrine and conduct that we take care to know and put into practice similarly are for the benefit of those around us.

Will we then pay careful attention to ourselves? To ensure that what we think, feel, and do will always be ready to be at the Lord's service.

MEMORY VERSE

"Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." - Acts 20:28 ESV

FURTHER REFERENCES

Watch *Dead Leader Running* (https://youtu.be/ScxvBqdNnf4) by Pastor Wayne Cordeiro