**THEY DID MORE THAN MOST**

The Lord includes several stories in the New Testament about folks who evidently were determined to do more than most. I doubt that any of them were concerned about being recognized but aren’t we glad that the Holy Spirit saw fit to include them in God’s story of His people?! Let’s look at a few of them and think about what their examples can teach us.

In a church full of problems, Paul took note of the household of Stephanas who had “devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” (1 Cor. 16:15) In a church that was for the most part, full of carnal minded and immature Christians, this one family stood out as being especially concerned about the needs of others.

Priscilla and Aquila were said to have “risked their own necks” for Paul (Romans 16:4). After meeting him in Corinth, they traveled to Ephesus with him and later we find them in Rome. It would have been a dangerous thing to have associated with Paul during those times when he was being persecuted. But they remained his “fellow workers.” Every preacher is blessed to have at least one such couple to encourage him wherever he preaches.

Paul wrote about Epaphroditus, who “came close to death, not regarding his life” for the sake of “the work of Christ.” (Philippians 2:30) He travelled all the way to Rome to make sure Paul had what he needed, apparently providing from his own goods, what the church at Philippi had not been able to give him. Think of the effort and inconvenience of making such a trip in the first place.

Onesiphorus from Ephesus also made a special effort to find Paul in Rome. (2 Timothy 1:16-18) He was not ashamed to be his friend and “refreshed” his spirit by visiting him. Again, we see someone like some of the others previously mentioned, who was not afraid to be associated with Paul and to make quite the effort to get to where he was.

And then there was a woman named Phoebe, who Paul said was a “servant of the church at Cenchrea.” (Romans 16:1-2) I’m not sure what all she did, but whatever a woman can rightly do in the “business” of the Lord, Paul commended her for it and said she was to be received and assisted by the church at Rome.

The church at Jerusalem ran into a problem of having some widows who were “neglected in the daily distribution.” The apostles responded by telling the church to find seven men of “good reputation” and “full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.” (Acts 6:3) In a church that at that time had about 5000 men (Acts 4:4), I wonder, was this all that was needed to do that work or was it all they would be able to find? Probably the former, but nevertheless, these men had distinguished themselves from most of the rest. A couple of these men preached (one sermon cost Stephen his life) with Philip especially going on to do the work of an evangelist. (Acts 8; 21:8)

Paul noted in his letter to the Philippians that they had bishops and deacons. (Phil. 1:1) That’s no small statement when I think of the many churches today that do not have such men. These were men who had come to be like those described in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They had proved themselves to be workers in the kingdom. They had made sacrifices to become shepherds and special servants among the Lord’s sheep.

And let’s not leave out Barnabas, which actually wasn’t the name he was first known by. He was called Joses, but because he was such an encouragement to others, the brethren called him Barnabas. (Acts 4:36) This makes me wonder what name our brethren might give each of us on account of who we are and what we do.

Even some preachers distinguish themselves from others. Apollos, for one, was “eloquent (learned) and mighty in the Scriptures” and “fervent in spirit.” (Acts 18:24-25) Paul wrote that Timothy cared for the Lord’s work more than any others that he was associated with at that time. (Phil. 2:19-21) These are fine examples to follow for all of us who preach.

Surely, we can all do a little more in the Lord’s work. But there’s always going to be those who do more than most. And if we are not going to be them, we can at least “hold such men in esteem” (Phil. 2:29) and “assist” them in work they are doing. (Romans 16:2) The Lord’s work is accomplished by both those who lead (they are doers without being asked) and by those who “submit” (1 Cor. 16:16), helping in any way that they can.

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