

HEROES

UNLIKELY

Last week we learned why Paul was unlikely hero of the Christian faith.

He was ready to die for the name of Jesus!

Acts 21:13

“For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.”

In the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918, one third of the world’s population was infected with the virus. About 50 million people died. 675,000 people died in the United States. Mortality was high in people younger than 5 years old, 20-40 years old, and 65 years and older.

Hospitals were overwhelmed.



Because hospitals were overwhelmed, many churches opened their buildings to care for the sick. Because there were not enough nurses, Pastors called upon their members to volunteer to minister to the sick. This created a crisis of faith for Christians. But many of them volunteered to serve the sick.

It cost many Christians their lives.

For example, a Christian publication called the *Gospel Advocate* reported this.

“J. D. Northcut, an evangelist from Tracy City, Tennessee, fell ill with influenza followed by pneumonia and died at the age of 43. He had given almost continual attention to sufferers near him.”

God is using this current crisis of our faith to cause Christians across our nation to answer this question, “am I ready to die for the name of Jesus?”

If you are ready to die for Jesus, the Holy Spirit will guide you on how He wants you to fulfill your mission.

Paul was a hero of faith because he was ready to die for the name of Jesus.

This morning I want us to learn something else about Paul that made him an unlikely hero of our faith.

He loved all people!

It is a natural work to be willing to die for what we love.

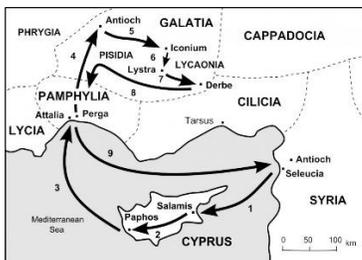
- A parent will die for their child.
- A friend will die for a friend.
- A soldier will die for his country.

It is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit to love all people and be willing to die for them.

But this is what Paul did!

Examples:

- He was despised by the Jews, his countrymen, but he loved them anyway and kept trying to reach them with the gospel. He loved them even though they falsely accused them, defamed him, and had him arrested. At one point in his letter to the church at Rome, he said if he could be accursed so his brethren the Jews could be saved, he would do it. At the end of his life while living in Rome, Paul is still trying to reach the Jews in Rome with the gospel.
- He was despised by the gentiles, but he loved them anyway and kept trying to reach them with the gospel.



Acts 14:19-22-At Lystra

19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.

Strengthening the Converts 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."
NKJV

Even when some falsely accused him, stoned him, and left him for dead, he loved those people anyway and kept trying to reach them with the gospel. He went back into the city.

- He was despised by members of the churches that he founded, but he loved them anyway. The church at Corinth disappointed him. Some in the church were outspoken in their contempt for Paul. But his letters to the church reveal Paul's love and devotion to the church despite his disappointment.

It was because Paul loved all people that Paul became a hero of faith.

Why did Paul love all people?

1. His experience with Jesus

Paul was an enemy of Jesus, but Jesus still loved Him. Jesus modeled for Paul what He wanted Paul to become.

Paul loved His all people and kept trying to reach them with the gospel because of his experience with Jesus.

2. His salvation through Jesus

When Paul believed upon Jesus, He received the Spirit of Jesus. That union of his spirit with the Spirit of Jesus radically changed who Paul was as a human being. The love of God was shed abroad in His heart. His old character died with Christ. He became a new man in Christ.

Paul loved all people and kept trying to reach them with the gospel because he was one with Christ.

3. His commitment to follow Jesus

Jesus made it very clear to His disciples that following Him meant becoming a fisher of all people. (Matthew 4:19; Matthew 28:18-20) Paul understood this mission because it was revealed to him by Ananias right after His conversion. Paul loved all people because he was committed to follow Jesus.

Paul loved all people because of...

- His experience with Jesus
- His salvation through Jesus
- His commitment to follow Jesus

To be an unlikely hero of the Christian faith you must follow Paul's example and love all people.

This includes your

- **Your political enemies**

Your political enemies are those people that disagree with your political views and are a threat to your way of life.

Jesus told His disciples that following Him meant loving their political enemies. (Matthew 5:38-42) If a Roman soldier slaps you on your cheek, offer him your other cheek. If a Roman soldier tells you to carry his equipment one mine, carry them two. Jesus modeled for His disciples what it meant to love their political enemies by serving a Roman centurion and dining with tax collectors and other Jews who served the Romans. Jesus modeled for his disciples what it meant to love their political enemies by loving a Samaritan woman. Jesus modeled for His disciples what it meant to love their political enemies by what He said on the cross to the Romans soldiers who crucified Him. Father forgive them for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34) Then He died for the sins of His enemies as they cast lots for his clothing.

- **Your personal enemies**

Your personal enemies are those people that violate you; devalue you; take advantage of you; misjudge you; reject you; verbally abuse you; physically assault you; injure those you love. Your personal enemies may be members of your family, your neighborhood, your community, your school, your team, or any other organizations that you are a member.

Jesus loved his siblings and kept trying to reach them with the gospel even though His siblings mocked him and thought he had lost his mind. (Mark 3:21)

Jesus loved his disciples even though all His disciples abandoned him, one of his disciples denied Him, and one of his disciples betrayed him.

Jesus loved his own people the Jews even though they despised him, defamed him, arrested him, beat him, forsook him, and turned Him over to the Romans to be executed.

So many people that are currently calling for our society to love all people equally are failing to love the members of their own family.

Start loving your family before you try and change society!

Will you allow the behavior of people to keep you from loving them? Or will you love them like your heavenly Father loves you?

What needs to happen to you for you to love all people?

- **You need to experience the love of Jesus Christ**

You experience His love by understanding that you are an enemy of God and that He loves you anyway.

- You need to be saved by the power of Jesus

Like Paul, you need to receive the Spirit of Jesus. Who you are needs to die and you need to be born again by the Holy Spirit of God.

- You need to be committed to follow Jesus

If you will surrender to your life to follow Jesus, Jesus will continuously fill you with His Spirit and enable you to love all people.

(Prayer)

Lord Jesus, I have been your enemy. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for dying for me.

I need your Spirit living in me. Please come into me and change me into your image.

I surrender my life to follow you. I am your disciple. Fill me with your Spirit so that I can love all people like you do.

Amen!