

## Heroes 5

Today we are continuing our study of heroes and we will likely do so at least one more week. We have been looking at snapshots of some of America's great heroes and more extensively at some of the great heroes of the faith. We have drawn from the studies inspiration and models for how we can and should be heroes of the faith to those around us.

Those of us who are baby boomers and older should remember well a TV series starring Fes Parker about one of our first and great American heroes.... [Youtube.com](#) "**Daniel Boone TV Show**"

The conquering of the west has become an American symbol. The movement of our country in that direction has demonstrated over and over again the courage, determination and free spirit of our people. One of the first men to explore the area west of the Carolinas was Daniel Boone. He spent years at a time in the woods, hunting, trapping, camping, surveying, trying to beat a path into Kentucky. Before he made it he'd been captured and adopted by an Indian tribe and escaped, had seen a brother killed, families massacred, nearly died in a blizzard, and once almost drowned. Be he never gave up.

In 1775 he led a small group of about 30 men through the Cumberland Gap in East Tennessee. From there they picked up woodland paths, connected trails beaten down by wandering bison, rolled away rocks and hacked down forests, cut through brush and posted guide markers to get through difficult sites. Three hundred miles later they stopped at the Ohio River where Louisville is today. And that trail became known as the

Wilderness Road. Within the next 15 years 100,000 people traveled it to open up the west. Daniel Boone, the first westerner, died penniless. But his land, his west, shaped and secured the nation that was just being born.

## **Daniel Boone- American hero**

(1) Courage/Fearless, (2) Solo- willing to go it alone,

(3) Perseverance (4) Sacrifice

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**Paul- Hero Factors** (There are many. These may be overlooked)

### **Sacrifice**

We are all aware of the sacrifices Paul made in his life to follow and serve Christ. From forsaking his place and position as a Pharisee of the Jews to exposing himself to great danger and harm as a preacher, missionary, church planter for the sake of Christ which eventually landed him in a Roman prison. Paul lived a life of sacrifice for the sake of the call of God on his life to preach the gospel.

But Paul not only sacrificed the comforts and position of Jewish leadership to make Christ known, he daily sacrificed his own will and comfort to make the gospel as palatable as possible to those he was trying to reach.

**19** For although I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, in order to win more people. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win

those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those who are outside the law, like one outside the law—not being outside God’s law, but under the law of Christ—to win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup> Now I do all this because of the gospel, that I may become a partner in its benefits. **1** Cor 9:19-23 (HCSB)

To put it simply Paul willingly gave up those things, customs, cultural preferences, traditions, habits and patterns that were near and dear to him in order to win the right to be heard. When he went to Galatia he adopted the Galatian culture. When he shared Christ with a farmer, he spoke in farm lingo and probably worked alongside the farmer as he talked about the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. When he debated with the philosophers in Athens, he spoke intellectually. When he presented Christ to the Jews, he quoted Old Testament prophecies. He seemed to totally change the way he presented himself and the gospel each place he went, but he never compromised or diluted the gospel message. Was Paul being dishonest about who he was? Was he being deceitful? No, he was sincerely sacrificing his own personal and cultural preferences and while sincerely trying to adapt to the community and culture he was visiting out of sincere respect and compassion for those he was trying to reach.

**Humility** Though Paul could be easily argued to be the greatest hero of the entire church era from then until now, Paul’s letters were riddled with evidence of sincere humility. His greatness was clothed in greater humility. And he himself professed that his letters were more bold than his speech.

**1** When I came to you, brothers, announcing the testimony of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom.

<sup>2</sup> For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup> And I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. <sup>4</sup> My speech and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not be based on men's wisdom but on God's power. **1** Cor 2:1-5 (HCSB)

**9** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by God's grace I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not ineffective. **1** Cor 15:9-10a (HCSB)

**7** But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of Him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them filth, so that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ —the righteousness from God based on faith. **P**hil 3:7-9 (HCSB)

**Love for the church** It doesn't matter which letter you read, even the ones to the church at Corinth where sin, confusion and false teaching were rampant. He started each letter with words of great affection and encouragement for the church in that city.....

**8** First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world. <sup>9</sup> For God, whom I serve with my spirit in [telling] the good news about His Son, is my witness that I constantly mention you, <sup>10</sup> always asking in my prayers that if it is somehow in God's will, I may now at last succeed in coming to you. <sup>11</sup> For I want very much to see you, that I may impart to you some

spiritual gift to strengthen you, <sup>12</sup> that is, to be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. **Romans 1:8-12 (HCSB)**

And throughout each letter, even amid strong corrective language, Paul's love for each church and the church as a whole oozed out.

**Great Christian heroes:** (you and me)(obedient, available)

**Humility** No matter how gifted, strong, influential and used of God a person is, if their ministry is not tempered with consistent and genuine humility, that ministry will not hold up and people will eventually be turned away from Christ instead of being drawn to Him. Pride draws attention and glory to self. Humility deflects all praise and honor to the only One who truly deserves it- Jesus Christ.

**1** I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, <sup>3</sup> diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds [us]. **Eph 4:1-3 (HCSB)**

**Love for the church** I have been hearing for a number of years that a growing number of Americans are interested in spiritual things, even Christianity, but they are not interested in the "established" church. Some reasons/excuses are somewhat valid while others or not. But can you love Christ and not love His church?

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as also Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her in the washing of water by the word. <sup>27</sup> He did this to present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and blameless. **Eph 5:25-27 (HCSB)**

You can't love Jesus without loving His church! I have a problem with, and more importantly, I believe Jesus has a

problem with those who claim to know and follow Him but choose to live out their faith in isolation from the rest of the body. As flawed as she is in her earthly state, the church is the body of Christ on earth and must work together cooperatively in order to fulfill Christ's mandate to "make and teach disciples."

I love the church. I love this church. I love you. Last time I checked no one is perfect which makes us a considerably imperfect church. But I love it and more importantly God loves us. We are His body on earth.

**Sacrifice** In the 35 years I've been in the ministry, I can only remember one fairly major doctrinal issue that I, and the churches I served, have faced. But do you know how many disagreements, complaints, and outright conflicts have surfaced over non-essential matters? By non-essential I mean those things that the scripture has nothing to say about. They are simply our personal preferences like- scheduling, forms and styles. For example- how often and when to have the Lord's Supper, traditional or contemporary music in worship, when and where a bible study group should meet and what to call it,

In my observation, what is lacking in most local churches today is a genuine spirit of sacrifice among its members. There are very few people in 21<sup>st</sup> century American churches like Paul who are willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of the gospel. We want church to be done the way we want it done and we want it done the way it was done when we were growing up in church. Forget the community and culture in which we now live. Forget the young families in the neighborhoods surrounding our church. Forget our own children and grandchildren! And that is at least a major reason why 80% of all churches in America are stagnant or declining. Do you understand that by far and large the church in America is dying, losing her influence, and failing to be salt and light in the world?

We are, to a great degree, failing because we refuse to “become all things to all people, so that (we) may by all means save some.” Most churches expect unbelievers and new believers to conform to the patterns and styles of church practices and traditions that were brought over here by the Pilgrims and the Puritans. As far as I know there was nothing wrong with how the Pilgrims and Puritans did church, it was just another culture that shaped those practices.

I have on numerous occasions in various places heard people pray using 15<sup>th</sup> century English. I’ve seen people fuming mad because the church used songs that were composed later than 1960 and played on instruments other than a piano or organ. I’ve seen people get seriously upset because someone sat in their seat.

**1** Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. **R**omans 12:1 (HCSB)

Because of the great mercy shown us through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, we are urged to sacrifice our bodies, our wills, our preferences and traditions for the sake of God’s kingdom and His glory.

Example: If we go to a foreign country on a mission trip with the purpose of proclaiming the gospel and that country’s language is something other than English, wouldn’t it be rude and selfish to expect them to understand what we say. We must learn their language or arrange for translators so that they can understand in their own language and we must present it in a

culturally relevant method. (In most countries, shorts are not acceptable so we don't wear shorts)

I have heard from several different missionaries that just attempting to learn some of the language of the people we try to reach makes a tremendous impact on them and makes them more receptive to our message. And, our attitude and actions should be no different in our local church. We need to be culturally accommodating to the community we're trying to reach. We must never compromise or dilute the message but we must always be ready and willing to sacrifice our own traditions and preferences for the sake of making the gospel appealing to our lost friends and neighbors.

This is one of the key struggles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century church- die a slow death clinging to our traditions or sacrifice and change to meet the challenges and needs of the next generations. Some things may stay the same while some need to be restructured and other things we do may need to cease. But, everything needs to be evaluated in light of our purpose to "make and teach disciples." We must be willing to sacrifice any and all of our sacred cows.