

**ACTS**

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Acts chapter 20 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

As you may remember from our last study, Paul was in Ephesus on his third missionary journey and God was working mightily there. Many lives were changed as they came to saving faith in Jesus.

We are told in Acts 19:18-20, “**And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.**”

And make no mistake about it. When the light of Jesus Christ shines down upon the darkness, it begins to expel the darkness, but the darkness does not give up.

In Ephesus we saw that the idol makers were upset, specifically Demetrius, a silversmith. The idol that was popular in Ephesus was of the goddess Diana and now their business is slowing down, people are not buying these idols any longer.

Thus, Demetrius calls for an emergency meeting of the Local 201 Idol Makers, and they too are upset that their business is drying up, they are losing money.

So they get the people of Ephesus in an uproar and things got so bad that they ran into the theater in Ephesus, that held some 25,000 to 30,000 people, and they began to shout for two hours “**Great is Diana of the Ephesians!**”

As the city clerk or Mayor sees things turning into anarchy, he gets up and tries to quiet the crowds down by telling them no one can take Diana away from us, it is what we are known for.

You see, he was concerned that if this got even more out of control, if it turned into a riot, then Rome would come down upon them because Rome did not look too kindly to this kind of activity and they may lose some of their freedom they had with Rome.

So he dismissed the people and that is where we will pick-up our study this evening in Acts chapter 20, beginning in verse 1 as Paul is still in Ephesus, and let's see what the Lord has for us this evening as we study His Word.

## ACTS 20

### VERSE 1

Keep in mind that when this riot was going on Paul wanted to get in the middle of it and in Acts 19:30 we are told, “**And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.**” They knew if Paul stepped in things would get more out of control and Paul's life may be in danger. So they kept Paul away!

And as the riots quieted down, and things kind of got back to normal, Paul figured it was time to move on, he didn't want to cause more trouble for the disciples in Ephesus. So he heads westward across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia.

Remember that Paul has spent two plus very fruitful years in Ephesus, sharing his faith and building people up in the faith. But now it was time to go.

Also, on this journey he is collecting money for the saints in Jerusalem who were hurting; things were not going well for them. In doing this, this act of love on the Gentiles part, it would have helped unite them together in Christ.

In three of Paul's epistles, written at this time, he mentions this gift he was gathering for the saints in Jerusalem.

In I Corinthians 16:1-4, written shortly before he left Ephesus, we are told, "**Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.**"

Paul desired unity in the body of Christ! (Also, we see this in II Corinthians chapters 8-9, written from Macedonia and in Romans 15:25-28, written from Corinth.)

Of this one writer put it like this, "One activity that especially concerned Paul at this time was collecting money for the relief of impoverished believers at Jerusalem . . . Paul viewed it as a symbol of unity that would help his Gentile converts realize their debt to the mother church in Jerusalem." (Longenecker)

#### VERSES 2-5

As Paul finished up in Macedonia he was going to set sail from Cenchrea, which was the port of Corinth and go to Syria and then to Jerusalem, probably for Passover.

But Paul found out that some of the Jews were plotting to kill Paul and probably throw his body overboard, so he decides to go back through Macedonia, across the Aegean Sea to Troas, and from there find another ship to take him home to Israel.

Thus, instead of trying to make it for Passover, he is trying to make it to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost that took place 50 days later!

Of this time period, one writer tells us,

Paul's extended time in this region may help to explain a bit of a puzzle. In Romans 15:9, Paul made this claim: *So that from Jerusalem and round to Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.* The puzzle is that the Book of Acts never specifically mentions a visit by Paul to Illyricum, but it may fit in here at Acts 20:2-3, where Paul **had gone over that region . . . and stayed three months.** Illyricum is due west from Thessalonica, and there was a famous Roman Road (the *Via Egnatia*) that went between Thessalonica and the Roman province of Illyricum. Today, the area of Illyricum is modern day Albania, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea, with the mainland of Italy westward across the water.

The mention of Illyricum in Romans 15:19 reminds us that the Book of Acts, as wonderful as it is, *is by no means a complete accounting* of all that God did through His people in the first century. There is much, even in the life of the Apostle Paul, that is not described – not to mention the life and work of many, many others.

- David Guzik

Just a little insight of what was probably going on during his stay there.

Now, in Acts 20:4-5 we are told of several men that accompanied Paul. Some of these men were probably representatives of the churches that were sending money to Jerusalem to help the church in Jerusalem and what a blessing to not only see the people you are helping but to have them see you.

And we see that these men that were with Paul traveled on ahead and met up with Paul in Troas.

#### VERSE 6

As Paul is in Philippi he gets together with Luke, who remained in Philippi according to Acts 16:40. Let me show you why I believe Luke stayed in Philippi.

In Acts 16:40 Luke tells us, “**So they went out . . . and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.**” It no longer says, “**we.**”

But, as we see here in Acts 20:5-6, “**These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.**”

Notice that it says, “**we sailed away from Philippi**” and thus, it sounds like Luke is now joining them once again and they take a ship to Troas, some 150 miles, after the Days of Unleavened Bread or Passover was finished.

On Paul’s second missionary journey it only took two days to travel this distance, (Acts 16:11), and here it took five days, which tells me the winds must have been against them.

VERSES 7-12

Here in Troas we are told the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week, or on a Sunday to worship the Lord. It seems they gathered in the evening, because Sunday was a normal working day for them.

What I want you to notice is that the early church did not gather on the Sabbath or Saturday, but on Sunday to worship God.

Today there are those who say if you worship God on any other day than the Sabbath you will go to Hell, it is the mark of the beast, and-so-on! To me, that is the most ridiculous thing in the world!

Please listen carefully to what Paul said in Colossians 2:16-17, **“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”**

These things pointed to Christ and now He is here, the substance. Thus, the reality is I can worship God any day and every day of the week, not just on the Sabbath or on a Sunday.

And I will give you a few reasons why we are not obligated to meet on the Sabbath.

Think about this for a minute. Who was the Sabbath’s day worship given to? The Saturday Sabbath was given to Israel as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 31:16–17; Ezek. 20:12; Neh. 9:14). Since Christians are under the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8), they are not required to observe the sign associated with the Mosaic Covenant.

Not only that but there is no command in the New Testament for Christians to observe the Sabbath.

And, not only do we see this practice in the Bible that the early church met on Sunday, but we also see it in extra-biblical writings.

Early in the Second Century Ignatius wrote, “Let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all days.”

Also, Justin Martyr described how Christians worshiped later in the Second Century, “On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. . . . Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because. . . Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.”

This should not be that difficult and yet, for some, they will make it a big deal. We worship the Lord on every day and any day that we want, and we gather together not only on Sunday’s but Thursday’s as well. And we have men’s studies, we have women’s studies, we have prayer meetings and the focus is always on the Lord.

Also, keep in mind that Paul’s time in Troas was short, so he speaks to them late into the night the things of God, sharing Jesus with them through the Scriptures. In fact, in verse 11 we are told that he taught until daybreak! Paul was a man who wasn’t going to let any opportunity pass him by, he utilized his time well!

Several weeks back someone asked if I thought it was okay to have skits done at church. And for me, I only have a short time to teach you the Word of God and I don’t want that time cut short. God’s Word is living and powerful and that is why I teach it to you! Skits can be useful, but the Word of God is what needs to be taught, from Genesis to Revelation! And the problem is that many make the skits the primary diet and the Word of God is watered down and taught for a very short period of time!

At this service was a young man named Eutychus. Some say he was anywhere from eight to fourteen years old and may have been a slave. And keep in mind that he probably worked all day and now, in the evening they are gathered together, and it may be the first time he sat down all day.

And as he sat there in the upper room, the third story, by the window, the heat was probably rising, the smoke from the candles ascending up, and before you know it, lights out for Eutychus. He falls asleep.

“The tenses of the Greek verbs portray poor Eutychus as being gradually overcome despite his struggle to remain awake.” (Hughes)

Not only does he fall asleep, but he falls out the window to his death!

I know I have put some people to sleep but I don't think I have killed anyone with my sermons! That is why we don't have an upper floor, too dangerous!

And what takes place is interesting to me. Paul did not rebuke this young man for falling asleep, ruining his sermon, breaking up the teaching!

He didn't mock him!

He didn't kick him around!

I guess if your dead it is hard to yell at the person.

But what we see Paul do here is he embraced this young man and life came back to his body!

Keep in mind that the name, Eutychus means Fortunate and I guess his name does fit his life!

Now how does this story relate to us? How can we apply this to our lives?

I guess we can make sure we are not sitting by an open window?



No, I believe it is a great example for us to follow that as a brother or sister in the Lord is going through tough times, their walk may be lifeless, it may even be dead, don't rebuke them, mock them, kick them around, but embrace them, love them and see how life will come back to them.

It is as Peter said in I Peter 4:8-11, “**And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**”

Think about what causes Christians to stop what they are doing, to break up, go away. It is for the silliest of things most of the time.

But, after this little incident that might have caused people to give up and go home, we are told that they were comforted seeing life come back into this young man and then Paul continued teaching until the break of day, another 6 hours!

What are you letting get in the way of coming together to worship the Lord? Don't let anything stop you.

Another point I need to make here is that I have seen some of you fall asleep and I totally understand it. You worked all day, this may have been the first time you had a chance to sit down and relax and before you know it, you are out.

I understand that. What does trouble me is those who are awake and hear the Word of God week in and week out and they leave here unchanged. That is heartbreaking to me. We need to allow the Word of God to minister to our hearts and transform us and if we don't, we will be conformed to this world.

And, if you want to know where you are at, take a look at what you talk about, the things that you are doing and see if God would be honored by them. We all should be doing that so that we may grow in Him!

Now Paul went on until daybreak, why did he go for so long? Because he didn't know if he would ever see them again and he wanted to share with them as much as he could about Jesus, to build them up in the faith!

#### VERSES 13-16

Paul is making his journey home to Jerusalem. And we see that Paul's men took the 30-mile journey from Troas to Assos by ship, which Paul walked, and it was a 20-mile journey by foot.

Why did he walk? Maybe he wanted to stay in Troas as long as possible before he had to depart or maybe he just wanted some time alone to think, to pray. We don't know but we do know he is trying to make it to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.

And we do see Paul catch up with them at Assos.

Then they board a ship and head to Mitylene, which was a leading city on the Island of Lesbos.

As they journeyed they hit some of the small islands of Asia Minor; Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, landing on the mainland at Miletus, which was a city 30-miles south of Ephesus.

Paul was not trying to avoid the people of Ephesus, but he wants to make it to Jerusalem for the feast day, Pentecost, if he could!

### VERSE 17

As they wait in Miletus, Paul calls for the Ephesian elders to come down. Why did he do that?

Paul was a man who wanted to build people up in the faith and thus, he wants to speak to them, encourage them in the work they were doing for the Lord!

In a sense, this is his farewell address to them and think about that, what would you say to a group of people that you might never see again?

And then listen to what Paul has to say – it is rich, it is deep, and it is just what they needed to hear!

Now I do want to touch on this because for some, this is confusing. Paul is calling for the “**elders**” of Ephesus to come down so that he can instruct them.

The word for “elder” in the Greek is PRESBUTEROS and it refers to a mature person who has been selected to serve in office.

In I Timothy 3:1 we are told, “**This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work.**”

Here in I Timothy chapter 3 Paul is listing the qualifications of a “**bishop**” or EPISKOPOS in the Greek.

This word, broken down means “over” (EPI) and “watcher” (SKOPOS) or an overseer.

A bishop is a word that is used interchangeably with pastors and elders.

In Acts 20:28 he is called POIMEN or shepherd, and in Acts 20:28 he is also one of the elders in the church or PRESBUTEROS in the Greek.

Thus, all shepherds (senior pastors) are elders but not all elders are shepherds.

Elders dealt with the spiritual matters of the church, while deacons dealt with the physical matters of the church.

And I believe what we see here is Paul speaking to what we might call the senior pastor's or the pastors of the churches in Ephesus.

In this message that Paul gave to them we can break it down into three sections.

Paul reviewed the past – Acts 20:18-21

Paul discussed the present – Acts 20:22-27

Paul spoke about the future – Acts 20:28-35

And, as we will see, Paul, in speaking of the past will focus on how he spent three years in Ephesus teaching them the things of God.

Then, as Paul speaks of the present he talks about his personal feelings, the things he was going through.

And then he closes with a look into the future, a warning to the churches of the dangers that false teachers and false doctrine will bring into the church.

So let's dig in and see what Paul has to say because I believe it is very applicable to us today in the church.

VERSES 18-21

Paul was a man who loved the Lord and served the Lord and people could look at his life and see that! How important it is for us to live what we say we believe because people will examine our lives to see if we are consistent in not only what we say we believe, but how we are living out our faith!

Paul lived a life surrendered to God, and that was his example to these men. May we do the same so that our lives are an example to others.

How was this manifested in his life?

Paul tells us that he served the Lord in humility. He didn't go around asking people to kiss his ring, give him special treatment, he didn't see himself better than others, and he was a servant of God ministering to men!

It is as Paul said in Colossians 3:12-17, **“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”** That is humility!

Paul also tells us that his ministry was filled with many tears and trials, it wasn't easy.

Now you hear that, and you may be wondering how in the world can that encourage them or us?

Because Paul, a servant of God, doing the will of God went through these things and we are no different, they will come our way.

Peter tells us **“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”** I Peter 2:21.

Thus, just as Christ suffered for us, so also **“... all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.”** II Timothy 3:12.

And the Psalmist said **“Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves with him.”** Psalm 126:5-6.

Through tears and trials fruit will be born and also rejoicing. You see, as you give your heart, expose yourself to others, you may get hurt, but don't let that make you hard and cold to others, insensitive to them, but have compassion towards them and there will be times of rejoicing!

Make no mistake about it, Paul's life was lived in humility, filled with compassion for people which caused trouble for him and even brought him to tears at times and yet, no matter what, he desired to teach, it didn't matter what came his way, and he held nothing back.

And that is not just pastors, but it is ministry, it is being a Christian, but even more so with pastors as they are overseeing the people that God has entrusted to them and some don't like that.

Today, what Pastor's do is far from what Paul spoke of.

My responsibility, as a Pastor, is as Paul said in Ephesians 4:12, is **“for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”**

Why? So the sheep can grow, they can mature, they can come to the fullness of Christ and not remain immature, tossed about by winds of doctrine that blow through the church!

It is as David said in Psalm 40:9-10, **“I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness In the great assembly; Indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know. I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great assembly.”**

And for some, they think that the pastor does everything but that is not the case. It is called the body of Christ and each person within a local body is responsible to do the things that God has called them to do. God has gifted us, and we are to use those gifts to bring glory to Him and bless the people!

And, as we can see, Paul’s zeal was to the Jews and Gentiles, that they may see and receive Jesus and thus he spoke forth with boldness and once they got saved, he continued to teach them, so they may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! In fact, Paul’s cry was **“... woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!”** I Corinthians 9:16.

And what was this message? **“... repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”** Acts 20:21.

In other words, he told sinners to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! It is the Gospel message that he presented to them and because the Word of God is living and powerful, many lives were transformed, many came to saving faith!

And isn't it interesting that this teaching of repentance is what is missing in the church today. Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

In 1937 the American Tract Society sponsored a contest in which they offered a prize of \$1,000 for the best new book written on one of the "essential evangelical doctrines of the Christian faith." [Eighty-one] years ago, \$1,000 was a lot of money and a great many well-known Christian authors entered the contest hoping to win the prize. A committee representing six denominations judged the entries. The judges unanimously chose a book written by a man whose name I have mentioned before - Dr. Harry Ironside, who for many years served as pastor of the famous Moody Memorial Church in downtown Chicago. The book he wrote is entitled *Except Ye Repent*. The title is taken from the King James Version of Luke 13:3 where Jesus said to the men of his day, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish".

Let me quote the first sentence from Dr. Ironside's introduction: "Fully convinced in my own mind that the doctrine of repentance is the missing note in many otherwise orthodox and fundamentally sound circles today, I have penned this volume out of a full heart." Repentance, he says, is the missing note in many otherwise sound churches. If it was so in 1937, how much more it must be true in 2006. [And today, in 2018, it is even worse]

In our day, and in our circles, the doctrine of repentance is not preached very often. There are several reasons for this. First, we live in a superficial age and any preaching of repentance is bound to cut through the superficiality. This is one point on which both liberals and conservatives share unspoken agreement - no one wants to go to church and hear hard truth from the pulpit, and repentance is the ultimate hard truth.



Second, some evangelicals fear the preaching of repentance because they think it somehow opposes the gospel of grace. Their fears are justified if repentance is made to equal penance, the act whereby a man atones for his own sin. But that is not true biblical repentance. Where true repentance is preached, it actually promotes the grace of God.

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We need to get back to what the early church taught in regard to salvation, that you need to repent and ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of your life. For without repentance, which means you are a good person and you have not done anything wrong, why do you need a Savior?

#### VERSES 22-27

In these verses we see Paul speak of the present as he talks about his personal feelings, the things he was going through.

Please understand that God did not tell Paul to stay away from Jerusalem. In fact, there are some who find fault in Paul for going to Jerusalem because of the warnings he received.

Again, I don't see that. What I see is a man who was warned ahead of time by the Holy Spirit of what was going to happen, chains and tribulations.

That is all he knows! Can you imagine if the Lord said that to you, "I want you to go here and you need to understand that chains and tribulations await you when you get there!"

"Lord, are you sure you want me to go, maybe Steve would be better for that, not me!"

It is not always easy when we look at things through human eyes and that is what was facing Paul, and what does he do as he hears over and over again this warning by the Holy Spirit of what awaits him in Jerusalem?

Nothing is going to stop him as Paul tells us, “**. . . none of these things move me . . .**”

It is as David said in Psalm 16:8, “**I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.**”

How in the world could Paul have said those words? Because he did not count his life, his physical life as important to him. He was not trying to live forever in this physical body, he knew it was going back to the dust of the earth and not a moment before God had appointed it to, and thus, he could say, “**. . . none of these things move me . . .**”

Now let me ask you this question. Is the gospel you preach worth dying for? Of course it is because it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes. And yet, think about what people are putting their faith in and you see if it is worth dying for.

The gospel of moral reform? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of save yourself through good works? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of social action and improvement? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of religious traditions? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of merely having spiritual conversations? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of mystical mumbo-jumbo? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel seeking the church of true happiness? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of self-esteem? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of ecological salvation? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of political correctness? Not worth dying for.  
 The gospel of emergent church feel-goodism? Not worth dying for.

I think Spurgeon sums this up for us as he wrote, “Yet there used to be a gospel in the world which consisted of facts which Christians never questioned. There was once in the church a gospel which believers hugged to their hearts as if it were their soul’s life. There used to be a gospel in the world, which provoked enthusiasm and commanded sacrifice. Tens of thousands have met together to hear this gospel at peril of their lives. Men, to the teeth of tyrants, have proclaimed it, and have suffered the loss of all things, and gone to prison and to death for it, singing psalms all the while. Is there not such a gospel remaining?”

That is a great question. As we have built up the self-esteem of Christians we have weakened them. Let me show you what I mean as we look at the evolution of magazines through the years.

Back in the 1950's it was Life!

Then in the 1960's we were reading People!

By the 1970's we read Us!

By the 1980's we were reading Self!

We can get so caught up with ourselves that we are of no use for God. Be careful. Paul was a man of humility. He had compassion for people that brought him to tears and he had trials in his life. He was not focused on self but on others!

He also taught people the things of God, not holding back. Paul was a servant, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, and thus, he could say “**. . . none of these things move me . . .**”  
What about you?

And make no mistake about it, Paul was in this race of faith to finish strong. Paul was not just in the race, he was in to finish the race that was set before him, and he didn't complain or grumble about all he went through, but he wanted to finish the race with joy!

How could he do that? Because of what God gave him, the grace of God to share with others, he felt he had no right to complain but to rejoice in all that God had given to him. It is as Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:16-18, “**Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**” How did Paul do in this race?

At the end of his life, as he sat in prison, Paul was able to say, **“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”** II Timothy 4:6-8.

May we be able to say the same as our life comes to an end that we finished the race that was before us with joy!

In Acts 20:25-26 we see Paul speak to these Ephesian elders that this was his last meeting with them. He told them basically that he would see them no more till they all got to heaven and then Paul makes this interesting statement, **“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.”** Acts 20:26. How could Paul say that? Why would he say that?

Listen again to what he said in Acts 20:27, **“For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.”**

Paul saw himself as a watchman, warning the people of the coming judgment of God if they don't repent and receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior of their lives.

And Paul did this by sharing with them some of the Word of God? No!

He did this by sharing most of the Word of God? No!

Paul did this by giving them the whole counsel of God, verse-by-verse, expository preaching! He didn't just pick the hot topics of the day, but covered all the issues, even the controversial ones!

That should be the heart of every pastor and I know it is my desire to continue to take you through the Word of God as we have already done and are doing again!

Now some today would say, “Pastor Joe, people today are not interested in that. If you want your church to grow, you have to entertain them. Don’t deal with those controversial issues; it will just cause people to leave!”

My response, simply, is what Paul told Timothy, a young pastor, **“I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.”** II Timothy 4:1-5.

Many today are not fulfilling their ministry.

Now some would argue “Is that really important to do, to go verse-by-verse through the Word of God?”

You bet it is and we will see the reason why as we read on!

#### VERSES 28-35

And now Paul speaks of the future, after his departure, and he gives a warning to the churches of the dangers that false teachers and false doctrine will bring into the church.

Please understand that the pastor, the shepherd is not here just to give a message and go. He is responsible for the sheep that God has entrusted to them! And to drive home that point even more, Paul says that these sheep Jesus has purchased with His own blood!

In other words, God gave His life for these sheep, and you need to do the same!

It is as Peter said in I Peter 5:2-4, **“Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.”**

And, as you look at the life of Paul, he was an example to these men and to us as he is admonishing them to do as he has done, to watch over, care for the people God has placed before them, the people He purchased with His blood. It is an awesome and humbling responsibility, but the Holy Spirit will empower you for the work He has called you to do!

But why is this so important? Paul tells us, he warns us, **“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.”** Acts 20:29-30.

The shepherd is to watch over the sheep, feed the sheep so that they will not fall prey to the false doctrine and the false teachers that are outside the church and inside the church.

The shepherd is to warn the sheep of the dangers that are out there, not avoid them or ignore them. I see this going on a lot in the church today, this avoidance or ignoring so as not to offend anyone and they end up hurting the ones that have been entrusted to them!

Not only that, shepherds are to expose the false teachers that are out there!

I realize that some get upset over this. I have experienced this myself with people getting mad at me. They think it is unloving to do that. I think it is unloving not to warn people of the false teaching and false teachers that are out there.

And please understand that Paul was not bashful to mention false teachers by name. In fact, he mentions five by name in his epistles. He mentions Hymenaeus (twice), Alexander, Hermogenes, Phygellus and Diotrephes.

Why would he do that? Because he loved the sheep too much to have them fall prey to these false teachings and false teachers!

Now, let me ask you this. Why is it so important to feed your sheep, to keep them healthy, to care for them? Because there are wolves who want to devour them.

Paul spent three years teaching them, warning them of these things. He was trying to protect them and here in Acts chapter 20, he warns these shepherds of these wolves coming in to destroy the sheep!

And make no mistake about it, wolves will try to come in and destroy the sheep.

You can tell because they bring division, chaos to a body.

Also, wolves will rise up from within a body to try and destroy the sheep and you can tell because they will draw people to themselves or their doctrine instead of Christ!

Thus, I will warn you of the wolves that are out there, even saying names if need be. I will protect you from wolves that may arise from within the church and that may seem harsh, but as a pastor, as the shepherd of this flock, God has entrusted you to me to care for, to feed, to watch over and if I didn't do these things, then it would show you that I don't love you and I would dishonor the Lord! It would show that I am more interested in myself and my popularity and thus, I would just ignore the false teaching and false teachers that are out there. I won't do that!

Thus, in humility, in teaching, with tears and trials I will shepherd the flock that God has purchased with His blood and entrusted to me!

And it is interesting that Paul had to warn them that from within the church itself, men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Perverse is from *diastrephō*, which means “to distort,” or “to twist.”

False teachers twist God’s truth for their own perverted ends. Draw away is from *apospaō* and could be translated “to drag away” or “to tear away.”

If the shepherds are not vigilant, Paul warns, the wolves will drag their sheep away to devour them.

And then in Acts 20:32 we see Paul place these men, these shepherds into the hands of God. He has done his part and God will watch over them and care for them.

And that is what I do with you, I will teach you, care for you, but in the end, I entrust you into the hands of God!

Also, Paul commends these pastors to God’s Word, which should remind us of what the apostles said in Acts 6:4, “**but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.**” Prayer and the teaching of God’s Word is the primary ministry of the shepherd.

As Paul concludes this teaching to these elders, he is leaving them an example.

He tells them to provide for yourself, your family, and don’t take advantage of your people.

You see, if you are pre-occupied with money, God will not bless your ministry.

If He called you, He will provide for you and many times that means working outside the church as well.



Listen again to what Paul closes with here, **“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”** Acts 20:32-35.

When did Jesus say, **“It is more blessed to give than to receive”**? Let me say this, we don’t have recorded all that Jesus said in His earthly ministry.

John tells us, **“And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”** John 20:25.

In saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive, if that is your heart attitude, giving to others, you will be blessed beyond measure, maybe not monetarily, but in other ways.

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 9:6-7, **“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”**

That is how we are to give!

#### VERSES 36-38

Can you see this crowd of Christians, maybe on the beach, all gathered together, and then they are on their knees in prayer!

Paul exhorted them in how to walk, what to do, and now he prays that God would empower them to accomplish the work!

And we see their great love for Paul. And why did they love Paul so much? Yes, he was a brother in the Lord, but even more than that. He gave of himself to them and now he is leaving them to carry on the work, knowing that the next time they will probably see him is in heaven!

Thus, they hugged and kissed him as they walked him to the ship he would be leaving on.

Thus, serve in humility, with compassion that may bring tears and trials, teaching people the things of God, warning and exposing false teaching and false teachers, not holding back, with a heart of a servant!

I truly believe that if you give your life totally to the Lord, if you are focused upon Him, then you will love the sheep. But you will never love the sheep or the brethren without loving God first.

And as you surrender your life to the Lord, as you die to self, you will be able to say as Paul did, **“But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”** Acts 20:24.

