

Acts
20:17-27
“Final Message”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 17-21 Knowing how to serve

III.) Vs. 22-27 Finishing the race with joy

I.) Intro.

While reading Luke’s record of Paul’s travels in 20:1-10, I couldn’t help but notice three things concerning the reason **why it is important to attend Church as well as specifics of the essentials of a church service!**

First: Consistently going to Church will give you three things:

ī **Vs. 1 It will SUSTAIN you in God’s glorious grace, after the world has shouted at you!**

ī **Vs. 3 It will WARN you when you are about to get on board with something or someone that would destroy you!**

ī **Vs. 6 It will ENCOURAGE you when the journey you’re on faces tough sailing!**

Second: Notice the FIVE **ingredients** that make up a Church service which will sustain, warn, and encourage you:

ī Vs. 7a Time, people, and a place

ī Vs. 7b A time when we gather for the **worship of God**

ī Vs. 7c,11b A time of instruction from the **Word of God**

ī Vs. 11a A time of fellowship with the **people of God**

ī Vs. 9-10 Most importantly the **presence of God**

In the first part of this passage the **emphasis is on the Church** and the section before us now, Paul has some things to say to **the Pastors about how to lead the Church!**

II.) Vs. 17-21 Knowing how to serve

Vs. 17 After staying in Troas seven days everyone except for Paul, sailed to Assos, where Paul chose to walk to it. From there they all sailed together stopping on all these little islands in the Aegean Sea until they landed Trogyllium (Tro-jill-e-um). This is a little port town in Asia one mile across the sea from the island of Samos, (*today they have called their harbor “St. Paul’s Port” in honor of his landing there.*) From there they walked inland to Miletus. As the crow flies only 30 miles from Ephesus but the windy road would have taken them several days to get there by foot. There are some general observations:

1. This is the only speech recorded by Paul given entirely to a Christian audience.

2. This is the only speech in Acts given strictly to Pastors. Luke calls them by **three different names** in this passage:

a. Vs. 17 **Elders**: This is where we get our word Presbyterian. It is borrowed from the Jewish synagogue and describes **the MAN in his maturity with the Lord.**

b. Vs. 28a **Overseers**: This is where we get our word Episcopal and it means bishop. This word describes **the man’s MINISTRY, which is to oversee the Church.**

c. Vs. 28b **Shepherds**: Here is where we get our word pastor from as it means to feed or tend the flock. So here we see in this word the METHOD by which the man exercises his ministry. Vs. 18-21 Now in verses 18-21 there are **six aspects** of what makes up **the heart of a pastor**. Notice that Paul is going to describe this in the **PAST** tense using the words “***you know***”. In other words these qualities of the heart were things that others would have observed in him while he served among them for three years and it is my prayer is that what you all observed in me during my blessed 18 years among you.

THE RIGHT HEART

a. Vs. 17-18 **Called**: Notice that when Paul and his entourage land in Miletus they sent for the Pastors in Ephesus, and they came to him. “***Paul sent, and they came to him.***” The fact is they were called and showed this by coming. This reminds us of when Jesus called Peter and his brother Andrew while they were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. He called to them by saying “*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” And they showed that they were called by “*immediately leaving their nets and following Him.*” My point is this: **the heart of a pastor is always available when the Lord calls.** These guys had family obligations, they had work responsibilities, but they set aside time to go to meet with Paul. Here then is the bottom line when it comes to pastoring “***You make time for things that are important!***” If you’re called you go, it’s that simple!

b. Vs. 19a **Perspective**: Look at this, who did Paul serve? He did NOT serve the People; no he served the Lord. ***Paul viewed ministry not as serving people first but rather serving the Lord. You can only serve others to the degree that you first serve the Lord.*** Otherwise you will be a man pleaser rather than a God pleaser. This speaks to having the right motive in your service.

c. Vs. 19b **Humility**: Next Paul says that they were able to see that when he was among them that he served in humility. No doubt part of this was related to how he worked while he was among them as we read in verse 33-34 that he “*coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel and provided for his own necessities*”. But I think it goes deeper than that and instead **describes a heart that truly esteems others higher than yourself.** True humility is NOT what the world thinks as “*thinking poorly of oneself*”. Instead it is **not thinking of oneself at all.** That’s only possible when you see yourself in the grace of God instead of your own merit.

d. Vs. 19c **Compassion**: Paul says that his service among them was with “*many tears.*” I believe we can see two things that caused those tears to flow in Paul’s heart:

1. **The lost**: In Rom. 9:3 Paul speaking of the lost Jews said that he “*wish himself accursed from Christ for my brethren.*” Paul said if he could give up his salvation so that the lost could have it he would.

2. **The Church**: In 1 Cor. 11:28-19 Paul in describing what he went through in the ministry says, “*what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*”

e. Vs. 19e **Faithfulness**: Paul uses the word “*trials*” here and then in verse 24 says that those trials which happen did not, “*move him.*” In other words Paul considered trials part of ministry and faithfulness to that which God called him to characterize his ministry. Tuff going did not

cause Paul to step aside from serving the Lord. The heart of the pastor must be faithful and not moved.

f. Vs. 20-21 **Teacher**: At the very core of Paul's heart was to teach the Church. Paul's ministry was making sure that he held nothing back from them that would have been helpful for their growth. In verse 27 Paul says that he, "*had not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*" Furthermore he did so both "**publicly**" as well as "*house to house*" (**privately**). Paul says that he was no respecter of persons as he taught both Jews and gentiles. Paul taught those familiar with the Word of God and those not familiar with the Word. Paul's teaching emphasized three things:

1. **Repentance towards God**: "Repentance" is **a change of mind that results in a change in behavior towards God**. Paul did not just preach against sin, he preached that they needed to have a change of heart towards God. You can preach against sin but until a person has a change of heart towards God they won't let go of their sin. **Paul taught about God's character and when people started seeing God as He really is they turned to Him and in so doing turned away from their sin.** Paul said in Rom. 2:4 "*that it's His goodness that leads men to repentance.*"
2. **Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**: Paul did NOT say that they didn't have faith but instead that they needed to redirect that trust "*toward our Lord Jesus Christ*". The world needs to see God differently and then they need to redirect their dependence from themselves to God. So that is what was at the heart of Paul's teaching.

III.) Vs. 22-27 Finishing the race with joy

Vs. 22-24 In the section above Paul's perspective was the past as he used the words "**you know**" now he changes that to "**I know**" as the Holy Spirit was showing him was going to happen. **Here then we learn the secrets of pastoral consistency.**

Paul spoke of what ought to be in the heart of a Pastor and finish's it with longevity. **Pastor's are in a race but it's not a sprint but rather a marathon.** Paul's point is that many in ministry have the wrong goal in the Church and not Jesus:

- a. Vs. 22-23 Paul says that his future is uncertain and at best it involved chains and trials. **We all hate an uncertain outcome full of disappointments.** And if a pastor's joy is found in doing ministry then they are going to be prone to being bummed out.
- b. Vs. 24 So Paul reminds them of what motivated him which he says was to, "**Finishing the race with joy**". Paul declares that there two things enabled him to do that:

1. "*Nor do I count my life dear to myself*": **First**, Paul said that **what kept him going was that his life was not his own.** To put it another way, "**It's not about me!**" Our society places all of its joy on self! This can be seen in magazine names over the last 50 years: In the 50's the top selling magazine was called "**Life**". Then in the 60's and into the early 70's it was "**People**". Then in the 80's and into the 90's it was "**Us**". Today people have stopped reading magazines and instead have adopted "Social media" as the top read which is mostly about ourselves! We might as well call it "**Self**". That's a sure-fire way of getting wiped out, looking out for number one!
2. "*The ministry I received from the Lord*": Paul declares that the ministry that he had received was from the Lord and not man. The Lord has given us the ministry that we are now doing. The

story is told of one of “Alexander the Great’s” foot soldiers whose responsibility it was to carry the spoil that they had taken in battle. He would load up the mules to carry it to the next destination. One day one of the mules came up lame and Alexander was at the back of all the foot soldiers and noticed that the movement of his troops had come to a standstill. Eager to find out what had happened he rode up to where the soldier was. There was the man whose responsibility it was to carry the spoil carrying everything that was loaded on the mule on his own back as well as leading the other mules. Not knowing it was Alexander the Great who asked why he did not just throw some of the spoil away the man replied, *“It is my master who has given me this charge and I shall carry it as long as I am able or die trying!”* To this Alexander replied, *“The treasure you are carrying is now yours, come ride with me.”* Ministry is very hard at times but only unbearable when it is our treasure we are attempting carry!

Vs. 25-27 Finally Paul says it for this reason that he had not stopped carrying that load. Paul wanted to make sure that he had left nothing out that was helpful for them. Paul did not just use the Word of God as a springboard to speak of some topic. Instead he taught the whole council of God not just certain topics. This is the reason I went through the Bible verse upon verse chapter upon chapter book upon book. So that I can declare to you that I’m innocent of your blood. I wanted to make sure that you got every drop you can out of the Word of God that was my responsibility, what you do with it is yours! I close with just two words: THANK YOU!