Ministry of the Holy Spirit
Acts 20:17-38
Lesson 38 – Let it Preach

Acts 20:17-38 (NIV)

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia.
19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.
20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. 22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.
25 "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. 32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" 36 When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Let Your Character Preach

1. Acts 20:18–19: Paul reminded the Ephesian elders that they knew how he lived among them. **Why is our character often a more powerful witness than our words? What would people say about your faith based solely on how you live?**
2. Acts 20:19: Paul served the Lord with humility, tears, and perseverance through trials. **Which of these three qualities is most difficult for you to demonstrate consistently, and why?**

3. Acts 20:20–21, 33–35: Paul's conduct supported the gospel he proclaimed. **What happens to our Christian witness when our behavior contradicts our beliefs? How can we rebuild credibility when we have failed to live what we profess?**

Part 2: Let Your Commitment Preach

4. Acts 20:22–24: Paul followed the Holy Spirit toward Jerusalem even though he knew hardship awaited him. **How can we distinguish between difficulties that come from obeying God and difficulties that result from our own poor decisions?**
5. Acts 20:24: Paul was determined to finish the assignment Jesus had given him. **What is the difference between being busy and being faithful to God's purpose? Could you be successful in life but still neglecting what God has called you to do?**
6. Acts 20:26–27: Paul refused to withhold difficult truths. Why do Christians sometimes avoid speaking biblical truth when it might create conflict? How can we speak the truth with both courage and love?

Part 3: Let Your Care Preach

7. Acts 20:28: Paul instructed the elders to watch themselves before watching over the flock. **Why must spiritual self-examination come before attempting to correct or lead others? What warning signs might indicate that our spiritual lives need attention?**
8. Acts 20:29–31: Paul warned that false teachers would arise, including from within the church. **How can believers distinguish between spiritual leaders who genuinely point people toward Jesus and those who seek personal influence, attention, or control?**
9. Acts 20:28, 31: Paul demonstrated that genuine spiritual care requires vigilance, accountability, and love. **What is the difference between caring for someone and trying to control them? How do we lovingly confront someone whose behavior is spiritually destructive?**

Part 4: Let Your Confidence in God Preach

10. Acts 20:32: Paul entrusted the believers to God and the word of His grace. Why is it sometimes harder to trust God with people we love than to trust Him with our own lives? What responsibility or relationship are you struggling to release into God's hands?
11. Acts 20:33–35: Paul demonstrated generosity and reminded the elders that giving is more blessed than receiving. **How does generosity reveal the condition of our hearts? What does it mean to give sacrificially beyond simply giving money?**

12. Acts 20:36–38: Paul's farewell revealed the deep relationships he had built through faithful living. **If you were leaving your family, church, workplace, or community today, what spiritual legacy would you leave behind? What would you want people to remember about your walk with Jesus?**

Practical Takeaway Challenges

Challenge 1: The Seven-Day Living Sermon Challenge
Scripture: Acts 20:18–19; Matthew 5:16
For the next seven days, intentionally examine the message your life is communicating to others. Each evening, ask yourself three questions:

1. Did my attitude and actions today reflect the character of Jesus?
2. Did I demonstrate humility, patience, forgiveness, and integrity when it was difficult?
3. Did someone experience God's love through something I said or did?
   Action: Identify one area where your conduct has not consistently supported your confession of faith. Make one deliberate change this week that allows your life to preach a better sermon.
   Personal reflection: If someone followed my example for seven days, would they be drawn closer to Jesus?

Challenge 2: Release What You Cannot Control
Scripture: Acts 20:24, 32; Proverbs 3:5–6
Paul understood the difference between fulfilling his responsibility and trusting God with the results. This week, identify one person, situation, burden, or outcome you have been trying to control.
Action: Write down what God has called you to do concerning that situation and what you must surrender to Him. Take one concrete step of obedience, pray specifically about the outcome, and resist the temptation to take back control through worry or manipulation.
Personal reflection: Am I demonstrating confidence in God's power, or am I living as though everything depends on me?

Final thought: You may never stand behind a pulpit, but every day you stand before somebody who is learning something about Jesus by watching how you live. Make your life preach a sermon worth hearing

Share your major takeaways from the Lesson/Sermon this week.

Commentary

E. Miletus, a Notable City in Ancient Myth (Part I): The Testimony of a Faithful Minister, 20:13-27

(20:13-27) **Introduction**: this is one of the most touching scenes in all of Scripture. It is a powerful message, especially to those who truly serve the Lord Jesus. (See **Maps of Paul's Journeys** for a picture of the journeys and cities.)

1. (20:13-18) **Paul**: Paul was gripped with the passion to visit Jerusalem. He set his face for Jerusalem and nothing would stop him from going there. Note two interesting points.

1. Paul's need and desire to be alone. The journey to Assos was only twenty miles by land but thirty miles by sea. Why did Paul wish to be alone and go by land instead of sea? The answer evidently lies in his need to be alone. Paul had been given a heavy burden by God to evangelize Rome and Spain (see note—Acts 19:21-23), and he had been warned by friends not to return to Jerusalem. But he delayed his evangelizing Rome and Spain; he wanted to minister in Jerusalem to his own dear people and to be present when the relief help was delivered for the poor. Paul was perhaps being bugged by the Holy Spirit and questioning what he should do; thus he sensed the need to seek God's face and to think the matter through. He needed to share the matter with his Lord. Note the similarity between Jesus' determination to make His final journey to Jerusalem and Paul's own determination. Both had their faces set for "going up" to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51; Acts 20:22. See outline— Acts 21:1-16 and notes—Acts 21:1-16 for more discussion.)

Thought 1. The servant of God must get alone and seek God's face for direction in his ministry, especially when significant changes or new directions are to take place.

2. Paul was extremely rushed and hurried. He was taken aboard the ship in Assos. The picture is that he rushed to get aboard and set sail. In fact Paul rushed so much, he left some baggage and his Scripture behind (cp. 2 Tim. 4:13).

Note that Paul determined the course of the ship (Acts 20:16). He had either leased a ship or the captain was willing to oblige Paul. The scene is that of Paul rushing from place to place, wasting no time, struggling to reach Jerusalem before Pentecost (Acts 20:16). He wanted to celebrate the pouring out of the Holy Spirit with the believers in Jerusalem. Note: he even planned to bypass Ephesus. However, for some reason the ship was delayed for several days at the port of Miletus, so Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus to come and meet with him (Acts 20:17). When they came, he shared one of the most touching scenes in all literature, a scene that can be titled, "the final testimony of a faithful minister to his dear people."

2. (20:18-19) **Stedfastness— Ministry**: the testimony of a constant, unswerving service. Note three points.

1. Paul was totally devoted from "the [very] first day" and through "all seasons" (*chronon* PWS: 3399), that is, through all kinds of situations and circumstances.

2. Paul was "serving the Lord" (*douleuōn tō kuriō* PWS: 3471), not self and not others. Note the word "serving" (*douleuon*): it is taken from the word bond-slave (*doulos*). Paul constantly called himself the slave of Jesus Christ

3. Paul's service was characterized by three things.

a. He served "with humility" (*meta pasēs tapeinophrosunēs* PWS: 2040) or lowliness of mind (see Deeper Study #1, Humility—Luke 14:11 for discussion).

⇒ He moved among all.

⇒ He recognized and acknowledged and shared with all, the lowly as well as the upper class.

⇒ He stopped to help in any way he could.

b. He served "with many tears." He had a tender, understanding, and compassionate heart. He wept over...

• the unsaved world (Acts 20:19, 31).• the carnal believers (2 Cor. 2:4).• the sensual and apostate ministers (Phil. 3:18).

c. He served "with many trials," especially in being attacked by the unsaved religionists (Jew). The point is this: despite the terrible trials, he kept on serving faithfully. (See note, Paul, Sufferings—Acts 18:9-11 for discussion.)

"He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:16).

3. (20:20-21) **Evangelism— Exhortation**: the testimony of urgency in evangelism and exhortation. Note five important points.

1. Paul taught the whole gospel, plainly and simply. He kept nothing back. The Greek says he did not *shrink back nor draw back*. He did not *shrink back* or *hold back* any part of the gospel. He did not tip-toe around the gospel. The whole truth was proclaimed and taught. Note the words "showed" and "taught." Paul taught so plainly and simply it was like showing the truth, painting it before the very eyes of the people. He did not use flowery speech and big words. He spoke simply on the level of the people.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God....and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Cor. 2:1, 4).

2. Paul taught publicly and privately. He used every opportunity he could to teach, even going from house to house. Note: his visits in homes were not strictly social calls. He, of course, did fellowship with believers in their homes, but the social visits were used to teach the Word as well.

3. Paul taught powerfully, as a man upon oath. This is seen in the word "testifying" (*diamarturomenos* PWS: 3946). He proclaimed the truth as a man of truth. He spoke with authority, as one who had the right of God Himself to testify.

4. He taught both Jew and Greek. He showed no favoritism or partiality. He was a Jew, but he did not favor the Jews. He was called by God to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and he was severely persecuted by the Jews, but he did not neglect the Jews. He preached to all men. Color, nationality, belief, status, poor, or rich—nothing mattered. He reached out to all.

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34-35).

"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12).

5. He taught repentance and faith

"And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2).

"Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops" (Luke 12:3).

4. (20:22) **Zeal**: the testimony of a nagging compusion to reach the lost. The words "bound in the spirit" mean Paul's own spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Paul was driven to do all he could to reach his own people, the Jews (Romans 9:1-3; Romans 10:1). The deep intensity of his compulsion can be seen in the fact that he was probably making the trip against what God really wanted him to do. There is a strong indication that God wanted him taking an evangelistic mission into Rome and Spain

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4).

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

5. (20:23) **Persecution**: the testimony of a willingness to suffer. Paul said the Holy Spirit bore witness to him that bonds and afflictions would come upon him in every city. Therefore, he knew that persecution awaited him in Jerusalem. He did not know what form they would take, but he would have to suffer when he arrived in Jerusalem.

⇒ Note the devotion of Paul: walking so closely to the Lord, the Holy Spirit prepares him for every trial he was to face.

⇒ Note the courage of Paul: marching forth despite knowing unbelievable trials and sufferings awaited him

⇒ Note the enduring commitment of Paul: persevering and continuing on with the Lord despite an unending series of persecution, and despite knowing that such afflictions awaited him no matter where he went.

"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29).

6. (20:24) **Consecretion— Dedication**: the testimony of total abandonment to Christ. This is a striking verse, but it is also a precious verse, and should be read many times to get the full impact of its message.

1. Paul did not count his life "dear" unto himself. His life was not for him to use and to do as he pleased, not for earthly comfort or pleasure. His life was not for himself; it was for Christ. His life was "dear" (*timian* PWS: 890),that is, *precious* and *valuable*; but it was not for himself, not for his own use. His life was the *precious* and *valuable* possesion of the Lord. The Lord possessed his life, for he had given it to the Lord, and the Lord was using it to the maximum.

2. Paul had given his life to the Lord for two reasons.

a. Paul wished to finish the course of his life with joy, faithfully and diligently running the Christian race to the end (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:13-14). Note: he did complete his course, proclaiming its fulfillment to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

b. Paul wished to finish the ministry which the Lord Jesus had given to him

"But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15).

7. (20:25) **Ministry**: the testimony of foreseeing his ministry in the future. Paul was probably thinking...

- of his future mission to Rome and Spain (see note—Acts 20:13-18).
- of possible persecution and martyrdom.

He knew that in either case he would not be able to visit the Ephesian church again. The scene was touching, tender, and solemn. Note: he had preached the Kingdom of God to these men.

"Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

8. (20:26-27) **Ministry**: the testimony of a clear and pure heart. Paul made an astounding claim, a claim which he meant to be a challenge to the ministers who stood before him and thereby to all ministers of all ages.

1. He was free from the blood of all men. If any man was unsaved, it was the man's fault (cp. Ezekiel 33:6).

2. The reason he was free was that he had proclaimed all the counsel of God. He had proclaimed the truth, warning every man.

"[Christ] whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily" (Col. 1:28-29).

"But if the watchman [minister, believer] see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezekiel 33:6).

Thought 1. The testimony of Paul should be the claim of every preacher and teacher in the church.

F. Miletus (Part II): The Last Words to Church Leaders, 20:28-38

(20:28-38) **Introduction**: these words are the last words of Paul to church leaders that are recorded. It is a critical message, a message that needs to be studied time and again by every church leader.

1. (20:28) **Minister, Duty— Sheep**: the first duty is to guard yourselves and the church. This is a strong charge.

1. The minister must look after his own life, his character and conduct, before he can look after the flock of God. He must "take heed" (*prosechete* PWS: 3882), that is, give attention, concentrate upon, focus upon, attend to, watch after, and guard his life. There are specific areas he must guard.

a. He must guard against false teaching.

"In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven [false teaching] of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (Luke 12:1).

b. He must guard against an unforgiving spirit.

"Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4).

c. He must guard against self-indulgence, drunkenness, and the possessions of this life.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).

d. He must guard against the fables, myths, speculations, ideas, and false doctrines of men, and the genealogies (roots, heritage, ancestry—useless knowledge) of men.

"Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do" (1 Tim. 1:4).

e. He must watch and give himself to reading, exhortation and doctrine.

"...give attendance [heed] to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13).

f. He must especially give himself to *the doctrine* (*te didaskalia*), the teaching of Scripture.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).

2. The minister must look after "all the flock." There are three reasons stressed in Scripture.

a. Sheep can wander about and get lost (see note—Luke 15:4 for five ways that a sheep loses its way).

"All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6).

"The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (Proverbs 21:16).

"As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place" (Proverbs 27:8).

b. Sheep can be seized by the beasts (false teachers) of the world and within the church

"All ye beasts [false shepherds] of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter" (Isaiah 56:9-11).

"Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the lord. Therefore thus saith the lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the lord" (Jeremiah 23:1-2; cp. Jeremiah 25:34-38).

c. Sheep without a shepherd are in a pathetic condition (see note—Mark 6:34 for discussion).

"But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

"For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

2. (20:28-31) **Minister— Church**: the second duty is to feed the church of God. The word "feed" (*poimainein*) is shepherd, to act as a shepherd. Church leaders are to shepherd the church of God (see note, pt.4, Shepherd—John 10:2-3 for discussion on the seven functions of *feeding* or *shepherding*). There are four reasons why the church leader is to feed the church of God.

1. The church must be fed because God has purchased the church and paid the supreme price for it with His own blood. Note three all-important points.

a. Jesus is unequivocally said to be *God*. He is the One who shed His blood to purchase the church. He is very God, very Man.

b. Jesus "purchased" (*periepoiēsato* PWS: 3093) the church. Therefore, it is His; He owns it and He has all say-so concerning everything about the church. As Purchaser, His Word about the care of His church is to be carried out explicitly, just as He dictates. There is to be no deviation whatsoever. Leaders are but overseers appointed by Him to shepherd His church as He says.

c. Jesus paid the supreme price for the church—His own blood (see Deeper Study #1—Acts 20:28 for discussion).

2. The church must be fed because it is the duty of church leaders to feed it. Church leaders are called overseers (*episkopous* PWS: 2815) or elders (Jewish name) or bishops (Greek name) or *presbyter* or *episkopate* (overseer). Note the terms are used interchangeably: elder (Acts 20:17), bishop (Acts 20:28), overseer or episkopate (Acts 20:28), and shepherd (feed, Acts 20:28). (See Deeper Study #1, Elder—Titus 1:5-9 for discussion.)

"The elders which are among you I exhort...Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

3. The church must be fed because false teachers will come in among believers and seduce them

4. The church must be fed because of Paul's supreme example of faithfulness. Paul sets a dynamic example for all leaders of the church. He was a mere man as every leader is, yet he was able to please God immensely, able to feed the church exactly as God wished. He demonstrated perfectly that the man chosen by God to be an overseer can shepherd the church as it should be done (see note, pt.1—Acts 14:14-18 for more discussion).

a. He "warned" (*nouthetōn* PWS: 4254): admonished. The word means both to give advice and to warn.

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

b. He warned everyone, not neglecting any or favoring any. He gave attention to all, saw to it that they were fully fed and shepherded.

c. He warned day and night: every day, every night, all the time, constantly and consistently, never missing an opportunity.

d. He warned them "with tears," full of compassion and concern, being touched by the misery and fate of the lost, the needs of the saved, and the glorious mercy of God.

"He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:17).

3. (20:32) **Believer, Duty**: the third duty is to live for God and for God's Word. The "Word of God's grace" is the Word of God's favor, of His glorious salvation in its fulness, of His truth, of His will. Therefore, the "Word of God's grace" is His revealed Word, both the Living Word (Christ Himself) and the written Word (the Holy Bible). Now note the point: the church leader is to be commended (*paratithemai* PWS: 649) to God's Word; that is, he is to place, commit, entrust, fix, lay, and deposit his life with God and His Word. Very simply, the church leader is to totally entrust his life to God and His Word, laying himself completely upon both. There are two reasons for trusting God and His Word so completely.

1. God and His Word will build up and edify the believer.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:10-14).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephes. 2:20).

2. God and His Word will give an inheritance to believers. The inheritance (*klēronomian* PWS: 2147) is both...

- present, in the here and now.

"To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 26:18).

"Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12).

- future, in the new heavens and earth.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:16-17).

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:3-4).

4. (20:33-35) **Ministers— Financial Support**: the fourth duty is to labor and give, not coveting worldly wealth. Note two striking points.

1. Paul did not covet worldly wealth. He did not covet silver or gold or clothing. In the ancient world rich clothing was a sign of wealth. Many in the church had plenty and some were rich. They had...

- money
- property
- stylish clothes
- transportation

But Paul did not covet what they had. His mind and thoughts were not focused upon worldly things. Money, property, clothing, and the latest in transportation held no appeal for him. He craved something far more important:

⇒ the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

⇒ meeting the desperate needs of the world.

⇒ delivering men out of the slavery of sin.

⇒ sharing the gospel of life everlasting.

Thought 1. The ministers and teachers of the gospel must be totally committed to sharing the gospel. And total commitment involves not only verbal preaching and teaching, but the spread of the gospel through the financial support of others. (See outline—˙ Matthew 19:16-22; note—˙ Matthew 19:16-22; outline—˙ Matthew 19:23-26; and note—˙ Matthew 19:23-26 for more discussion. These two passages need to be studied and applied by every believer, but especially by ministers and teachers of the gospel. Cp. 1 Samuel 12:3-5; 1 Thes. 2:5-6; 1 Tim. 3:3, 8; 1 Tim. 6:10.)

2. Paul labored at secular work. He was a craftsman, a tentmaker (see note—˙Acts 18:3). There are five reasons why Paul labored at secular work, five of which are given here.

a. To meet his own necessities (Acts 20:34).b. To help fellow ministers serving with him (Acts 20:34).

c. To support the weak (Acts 20:35).d. To be more like Jesus (Acts 20:35). This is a saying of Jesus that is not recorded in the gospels, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Jesus of course gave to the ultimate...

• coveting nothing of this world.• giving all He had to others.• sacrificing His own life for others.

Paul sought to be like His Lord, to be conformed to His image. For that reason, Paul labored at secular work when needed.

e. Not to be chargeable to the believers nor to the churches. This reason is not mentioned in this passage, but it is in several others (2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thes. 2:9; 2 Thes. 3:8). Paul meant at least two things by not being "chargeable" to any man, and these two things are powerful lessons for modern ministers of the gospel.

First, some unbelievers, and most unfortunately some carnal believers, were accusing Paul...

• of "coveting" a living from the churches.

• of seeking comfort and ease at the expense of believers and the churches.

• of receiving the offerings and stealing from them

By working at secular work and not accepting money from the churches, Paul was able to combat these charges and prove they were lies. Note: he also had representatives appointed by the churches to carry the church offerings to Jerusalem

Second, Paul wanted to be free and independent of the churches and believers. He did not want the congregation to feel as though he was their man, that he had to do their bidding. He wanted no restraint and no pressure put upon his right to move about and minister and preach the gospel as he sensed the need.

⇒ He did not want any temptation whatsoever, any sense that he must cater to the desires and whims and fancies of the congregation, not unless they were truly of God.

Thought 1. Note four very significant points.

1) Paul received financial support from some churches. He did not always labor at secular work, not in every situation. He saw the value in being completely free from the burden of financial worries so that he could devote full time to the ministry. (See note—Acts 18:3 for more discussion.)

2) The minister of the gospel has the right to receive his living from the churches. In fact, Christ taught that the minister was definitely to be supported by the church. (See outline—Matthew 10:9-10 and notes—Matthew 10:9-10 for more discussion and Scripture. This is an important passage, a passage that every minister and church should study, for it is our Lord's teaching.)

3) There are great benefits in following Paul's example when practical. Being financially free to minister as God directs without the influence of *carnal prejudices and fancies* would provide some clear advantages as pointed out above. However, every minister must always remember: there are some in every true church who walk ever so closely with the Lord, and have been doing so for years. God has given His vision for their church and their community to them. They have lacked only one thing—a Spirit-filled minister to help them. The minister needs to listen to these dear believers even if he is self-supporting.

4) Every minister should be *laboring* so he can support the weak (Acts 20:35). No matter where his income is coming from, he is to set the example for all others in giving to meet the needs of the desperate.

"I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Romans 15:1).

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men" (1 Thes. 5:14).

5. (20:36-38) **Conclusion**: the conclusion of Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders is a touching scene, the kind of affection being expressed that every minister and teacher of the gospel would covet. Note: Paul was so gripped with emotion he fell to his knees and began to pray for these dear men of God. (The scene was most unusual, for it was the custom of Jews to stand when praying in public.)

The elders...

• wept deeply. • fell on Paul's neck, embracing and kissing him repeatedly (Greek). • were gripped with sorrow. • accompanied him to the ship.

Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible - Commentary - The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Acts.