

# Acts 20:17-27 Commentary

Acts 20:17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church:[Apo de tes Miletou pempas \(AAPMSN\) eis Epheson metekalesato \(3SAMI\) tous presbuterous tes ekklesias. \(NASB: Lockman\)](#)

- **elders:** Ac 20:28 11:30 14:23 15:4,6,23 16:4 1Ti 5:17 Titus 1:5 Jas 5:14 1Pe 5:1 2Jn 1:1 3Jn 1:1)

## PAUL'S LAST MEETING WITH THE EPHESIAN ELDERS

In **inductive Bible study**, one of the key disciplines we must develop is learning to **interrogate** the text with appropriate questions. Acts 20:17-38 is an excellent passage to practice this technique, asking **Where?, Why?, Who?, When?, What? and How?** Take a few minutes and **prayerfully** read (take your time - don't speed read) Acts 20 (but read the entire chapter to help establish the **context**) asking as many of the 5W/H questions as you can before you look at the notes. As you read the passage try to get an overview or setting of this wonderful scene. As you read, imagine what it was like to be present. As you prayerfully interrogate Acts 20:17-38, try to imagine the scene and yourself as one of the elders. (asking and answering the questions will help you do this and then this text becomes far more than just another passage, but one that you will remember for the rest of your life!).

Below are some examples of questions you might ask to help establish the setting of this scene (in other words you need to establish the **context** of any passage or paragraph you are studying lest you end up deriving a faulty interpretation!)

How important is it to develop the discipline of querying the text? Listen to **John Piper's** answer....

You can learn more from a book if you stop and ask it questions than if you just read it passively. That includes the Bible too. One of the great problems in Bible reading is that we move our eyes over the words and come to the end of a column and don't know what we've read; we don't feel our minds or spirits expanded because we saw nothing fresh. It was purely mechanical. There was no discovery, no life, no breakthroughs to new insight. One of the best ways to change that is to train yourself to ask questions of the text. Often the posing of the question itself will already carry its answer with it and will open your mind to new things. This fairly prosaic, historical text in Luke 3:21-38 gives me an opportunity to show you what I mean. I'll simply take you with me through this text, pointing out the questions I asked and the answers I came up with. My guess is that as you follow me, questions of your own will arise. Good questions usually beget other questions, and that's how insight grows and grows. (**Introductory comments to his sermon on [The Baptism and the Genealogy of Jesus](#) - Now click the link to see actual examples of questions Dr Piper asked to actually preach this text! Now begin to incorporate this valuable discipline into your Bible reading. Beware of the danger of a "through the Bible in a year" reading program -- it is tempting to "just get through" the daily reading, but come to the end of the day and not even remember what you have read. That's "passive" reading. Interrogation of the text is "active" reading--your Teacher God's Spirit will richly reward you for your "labor of love!"**)

## SOME 5W/H QUESTIONS

**When?** Third Missionary Journey. Here are the Acts passages that mark the beginning of each of **Paul's 3 missionary journeys...**

**Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4)** ([Refer to Map 1](#))

**Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey synopsis (Acts 15:35)** ([Refer to Map 2](#))

**Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey Goto (Acts 18:23-21:16)** (Circa 52-57AD) ([Refer to Map 3](#))

**Who?** Who are the participants in this scene? Paul, his companions (Acts 20:4), Luke (Acts 20:6 = "we") and the elders of the church at [Ephesus](#) (capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, site of worship of [Artemis](#)).

**Where?** From [Miletus](#): ([See Map for location on Southwestern coast of Modern day Turkey.](#)) ([Diagram of Ancient Miletus - note the protected harbors](#)) **Approximately how far did the elders have to travel from Ephesus to meet Paul (see mileage scale in lower left hand corner of [Map](#))?**

**Related Resources:** [Background discussion of Travel in Biblical Times](#) [Multiple photos of](#)

[archaeological remains in Miletus - see index in left column](#)

**Why?** Why does Paul call the elders from Ephesus? In context (Acts 20:17-38) these are Paul's final instructions (cp Acts 20:38) Why did Paul not go directly to Ephesus? (Acts 20:16).

**What?** What does Paul do in Acts 20:17? What are the specific instructions he gives the elders? What are the warnings? etc. (cp Acts 20:28-32)

**How?** How long (approximately and assuming they were traveling by foot) would it take for the elders to come from Ephesus **Clue:** One could travel about 30 miles/day by foot). From the Map of Miletus, it is apparent that Ephesus is about 30 miles from Miletus. Whoever Paul sent to call the elders would have taken one full day and to return with the elders would take another day. Thus the elders would have arrived on the third day. How do Paul and the elders feel? How do they express their emotions? (Acts 20:37, 38)

**Called to** (summoned) ([3333](#))(**metakaleo** from **metá** = denoting change of place or condition + **kaléo** = to call) means to call from one place to another. In the middle voice (reflexive) the idea is Paul **summoned** the elders to himself. (All uses in the NT = Acts 7:14; 10:32; 20:17; 24:25, Septuagint Uses = Hosea 11:1, 2). **Summon** probably conveys Paul's sense better than **called**, because to summon someone implies the exercise of authority and the sense of a demand, not just a suggestion.

**Elders** ("presbyters" = NAB, "spiritual leaders" = GWT) ([4245](#))(**presbuteros** the comparative form of **présbus** = an old man or an ambassador) ([Click](#) Vine's discussion) referred to men who were older or more senior with no negative connotations but rather a sense of venerability. **Presbuteros** is transliterated into English as "presbyter" (a leader in one of the Jewish communities--especially a member of the **Sanhedrin**--or of the early Christian churches) and from which the word "priest" (from Late Latin presbyter) was derived. The secular practice was for older men with seniority to serve as ambassadors to other states and as advisors within the Greek political community or in the management of public affairs. So these were men of "ripe age" and experience to whom was committed the direction and government of individual churches. It should be emphasized that in the context of its Biblical use the concept of elder had less to do with age per se than with the quality of one's spiritual character (reputation is what others think about you but character is what those most intimately associated know is really true about you) and possession of the ability to teach. Simply being older, including even being older in the faith, does not by itself qualify a man for leadership in the church.

**Compare...**

Acts 14:23 And when they had appointed **elders** for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

**Presbuteros** - 66x in 66v - Matt 15:2; 16:21; 21:23; 26:3, 47, 57; 27:1, 3, 12, 20, 41; 28:12; Mark 7:3, 5; 8:31; 11:27; 14:43, 53; 15:1; Luke 7:3; 9:22; 15:25; 20:1; 22:52; John 8:9; Acts 2:17; 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12; 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22f; 16:4; 20:17; 21:18; 23:14; 24:1; 25:15; 1 Tim 5:1f, 17, 19; Titus 1:5; Heb 11:2; Jas 5:14; 1 Pet 5:1, 5; 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1; Rev 4:4, 10; 5:5f, 8, 11, 14; 7:11, 13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4

**Presbuteros** meaning church **elders** is discussed initially in Acts, refined in the "pastoral epistles" (especially 1 Timothy and Titus), and briefly mentioned in James and 1 Peter. In first Timothy Paul says

Let the **elders** (presbuteros) who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching... Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** (presbuteros) except on the basis of two or three witnesses. (1Ti 5:17,19)

In the book of Acts, Luke has several references to **elders** in the sense of spiritually mature leaders in the church. In a very instructive passage we read

And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And now the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the **elders** were present. (Acts 21:17-18)

**John MacArthur** has a summary of the evolution of elder rule commenting that

the mention of James and all the **elders** (Acts 21:18) marks a significant change in that leadership. When the **Church** at Jerusalem began, it was ruled by the **Apostles** (Acts 2:42; 4:35, 36, 37; 5:2). As the church grew, the apostles recognized the need for assistance with the administrative details, and seven men were chosen to serve under them (Acts 6:2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Elders are first mentioned in Acts 11:30, and by the time of the Jerusalem Council they had assumed a prominent role (Acts 15:2, Acts 15:4, Acts 15:6, Acts 15:22, 23; Acts 16:4). Now Paul and the others found the church led by the elders alone; the apostles are not mentioned. At least one was already dead—James the brother of John (Acts 12:2). The others had turned over the leadership responsibilities to the elders and left the city to engage in missionary work. Elder rule was thus being established as the New Testament pattern of church government (cf. Acts 14:23; 20:17). ([MacArthur, J:](#)

[Acts 1-12; Acts 13-28 Moody Press](#))

**H C Trumbull** writes about conferring **responsibility**...

There are two sides to the question of quitting ourselves of responsibility for those whom we have set to a special work. On the one hand, we may err by meddling with their work and worrying over it; on the other hand, we may err by failing to show our continued interest in that work, and in those who have it in charge. Paul committed neither error. He laid responsibility on the Ephesian elders, and had no thought of attempting to take it from them; but he wanted them to consider that responsibility in all its bearings, and to be assured of his loving and prayerful sympathy with them in its discharge.

**Here is a pattern for all those who have set others at work, in the church, in the Sunday school, in the place of business, in the home.** Do not worry yourself, nor worry those who have the thing in immediate charge, by your close attention to the details of their business—which is not yours. But do not fail to show them that you consider them lovingly and prayerfully, and that you commend them "to God and to the word of His grace" in their life and work—before their Master and yours. (Biblical Illustrator)

**Acts 20:18** And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time: [os de paregenonto \(3PAMI\)](#) [pros auton eipen \(3SAAI\)](#) [autois, humeis epistasthe \(2PPPI\)](#) [apo protes emeraz aph' es epeben \(1SAAI\)](#) [eis ten Asian pos meth' umon ton panta chronon egenomen. \(1SAMI\)](#) :

- **from:** Ac 18:19 19:1,10
- **How I was with you:** 2Co 1:12 6:3-11 1Th 1:5,6 2:1-10 2Th 3:7-9 2Ti 3:10)

**PAUL'S LIFE OF INTEGRITY:  
AN OPEN BOOK!**

**You yourselves know** - The pronoun "you" is emphatic. Paul first appeals to their personal knowledge of his life in Ephesus. He reminds the elders of his example of ministry among them --The first time Paul had been in Ephesus briefly was in Acts 18:19 and later he had remained for over 2 years, initially in the synagogue for 3 months and then in the "school of Tyrannus" for 2 years (Acts 19:1, 8, 9, 10). Paul in a sense is challenging the Ephesian elders to examine his life. His life was the validation for what he proclaimed with his lips. A life that matches one's lips, is another way to describe **integrity** (integer - see more below).

**Paul's 3 missionary journeys began in...**

Paul's 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13:4)

Paul's 2nd Missionary Journey synopsis (Acts 15:35)

Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey Goto (Acts 18:23)

**D Thomas** summarizes **Paul's Conscious Fidelity in the Discharge of His Ministry...**

I. Humbly. "With all humility of mind." (Acts 20:19)

II. Tenderly. "With many tears." (Acts 20:19)

III. Fully. "How I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you." (Acts 20:20)

IV. Indefatigably. "Have taught you publicly from house to house." (Acts 20:20)

V. Unrestrictedly. "From house to house." (Acts 20:20)

VI. Evangelically. "Repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20:20)

(Biblical Illustrator)

**How I was with you the whole time** - **NET Bible Note** explains that the phrase "*how I was with you the whole time*" "could be understood to mean "*how I stayed with you the whole time*," but the following verses make it clear that **Paul's lifestyle** while with the Ephesians is in view here. Thus the translation "*how I lived the whole time I was with you*" makes this clear." Thus the NIV rendering conveys this nuance better than the NAS...

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.

**Comment:** Paul's emphasis is not on the quantity of time but the quality of his life while he was among them. They had witnessed his life, his ministry, his example.

**Dear pastor, teacher, church leader -- with all honesty and integrity, can you say the same thing to those you have ministered to for some time -- "You know what my lifestyle was when I ministered among you." Or do you have some "rooms" of your heart that you've kept shut so that no one could see how you lived?**

Paul was authentic, transparent, the "real deal," an "open book," a man whose life said "What you see is what you get!" Does this not speak of Paul's integrity and his character? Reputation is what other men think about us. Character is what God knows to be true about us! Gulp!

**See Related Resource: Integrity - A Few Thoughts**

**Acts 20:19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews: [douleuo](#) ([PAPMSN](#)) to [kurio meta pases tapeinophrosunes kai dakruon kai peirasmon ton sumbanton](#) ([AAPMPG](#)) [moi en tais epiboulais ton loudaion](#):**

- **Serving:** Ac 27:23 Jn 12:26 Ro 1:1,9 12:11 Ga 1:10 Eph 6:7 Col 3:24 1Th 1:9 2Pe 1:1 Rev 7:15
- **with all:** 1Co 15:9,10 2Co 3:5 7:5 12:7-10 Ga 4:13,14
- **With tears:** Acts 20:31 Ps 119:136 Jer 9:1 13:17 Luke 19:41 2Co 2:4 Php 3:18 2Ti 1:4
- **trials:** 1Co 4:9-13 2Co 4:7-11 11:23-30 Jas 1:2 1Pe 1:6
- **Through the plots:** Acts 20:3 9:23-25 13:50,51 14:5,6,19,20 17:5,13 2Co 11:26

### **PAUL'S EXAMPLE: A HUMBLE BOND-SERVANT**

**Serving the Lord** - This phrase is similar to Paul's repeated description of himself as a "bond-servant (**doulos**) of Christ Jesus" (Ro 1:1, 2Cor 4:5, Gal 1:10, Phil 1:1, Titus 1:1)

**Serving** (present tense = Paul's lifestyle, habitual practice)([1398](#))(**douleuo** from **doulos** = servant) means to be in a position of a slave and to act accordingly, conducting oneself in total service to another. **Douleuo** includes the idea of one serving another who owns him as a "possession."

**Lord** ([2962](#)) (**kurios** from **kuros** = might or power) describes the supreme One (in context = Jesus), the One Who is sovereign and possesses absolute authority, absolute ownership and uncontested power.

**Paul** served the **Lord** (**kurios**), for he knew that...

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. (Mt 6:24-note)

**Eadie** explains that for Christian **servicing** as Paul exemplified one must...

remember Christ the Master, and in serving others...serve Him—the Master not according to the flesh. In external aspect the service was to men, but in motive and spirit it was to the Lord (See Eph 6:7)...Menander has also said—"serve freely, and you are no longer a slave." (John Eadie, D., LL.D. The Epistle of St Paul to the Ephesians)

### **THE SECRET OF FRUITFUL SERVICE TO THE LORD**

**Humility of mind** ([5012](#))(**tapeinophrosune** from **tapeinos** = low lying, then low or humble + **phren** = to think) literally means to think with lowliness and thus speaks of humiliation or lowliness of mind, the quality of unpretentious behavior, a humble attitude, modesty or absence of arrogance (See the other 6 uses of **tapeinophrosune** - Ep 4:2 Php 2:3 Col 2:18, 2:23, 3:12, 1Pe 5:5). This mindset (or "heart-set") is the essence of having the "attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...He humbled Himself by becoming obedient..." (Php 2:5, Php 2:8) The idea is the esteeming one's self as small or recognizing one's insufficiency but at the same time recognizing the powerful sufficiency of God! Indeed, do we not see in Paul's **humility of mind** a clue as to why he was so greatly used by God! Recall Paul's record of his "out of body" experience (2Cor 12:2, 3) in which he was "caught up (Greek = **harpazo** ~ "raptured") into **Paradise** and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak." As a result of this

incredible supernatural experience "because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself!" (2Cor 12:7). Paul "entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from" him (2Cor 12:8), to which the Lord Jesus responded..

My grace is sufficient (enough, adequate) for you, for (My)**power (dunamis** = supernatural ability to accomplish) is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2Cor 12:9-see commentary notes)

**Comment:** Paul boasting about his weaknesses is compatible with a form of **'humility of mind.'** And what was the result? Paul experienced the "power of Christ." I personally believe (this is speculative so be a Berean-Acts 17:11) that this episode of Paul's having experiencing the sufficiency of God's grace and power 14 years earlier (and his learning to boast about his weaknesses) was a significant source of his supernatural power for ministry in the subsequent years. Keep in mind that Paul's "being caught up" to Paradise and subsequent thorn in his side would be somewhere around **Paul's First Missionary Journey**, possibly even coinciding with the time of his stoning in Iconium in Acts 14:19. (Compare [Chronology of Paul - 2Corinthians written about 58AD](#)) **Application:** What looks to us as a "thorn in our flesh" at a moment in time, quite often takes on a different "hue" over time, if we grow in grace rather than allowing ourselves to become bitter rather than "better"!

**John Wesley** observed that "neither the Romans nor the Greeks had a word for humility." The very concept was so foreign and abhorrent to their way of thinking that they had no term to describe it. When, during the first several centuries of Christianity, pagan writers borrowed the term **tapeinophrosune**, they always used it derogatorily—frequently of Christians—because to them humility was a pitiable weakness!

**Vine** has an interesting thought on **humility of mind** noting that it is...

not a merely moral quality, but the **subjection of self** under the **authority of**, and in **response to**, the love of the Lord Jesus (cp 2Cor 5:14), and the power of the Holy Spirit to conform the believer to the character of Christ. In contrast to the world's idea of being "poor-spirited" (in Classical Greek tapeinos commonly carried that imputation), the Lord commends "**the poor in spirit**" (Mt 5:3-note).

**Humility** as discussed below always had a negative connotation in classical Greek. Christianity elevated this term to the supreme virtue, in fact providing the ultimate antidote for self-love that poisons all relationships.

Paul was an imitator of Christ (1Cor 11:1, 1Cor 4:16) Whose Self-less example lifted **humility of mind** to the highest place in the sight of God when He declared...

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45, cp Lk 22:26, 27, Php 2:8 = "He humbled Himself")

Compare the preceding thoughts with Paul's words as he matured in Christ over the years...

1Cor 15:9 **[55AD]** = For **I am the least of the apostles**, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Ep 3:8 **[61AD]** = To me, **the very least of all saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

1Ti 1:15 **[63-66AD]** = This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save **sinners; of whom I am chief.**

**Rowland Hill** wrote...

See yon evening star, how bright it shines! how pure, how gentle are its rays! But, look, it is lower in the heavens than those that sparkle with a restless twinkling in the highest regions of the sky. God keeps you low that you may shine bright. Where do the rivers run that fertilize our soil? Is it in the barren top of yonder hill? No; in the vales beneath. If you would have the river, whose streams make glad the city of our God, to run through your hearts, and enrich them to His glory, you must abide in the vale of humility.

**With tears** - Many think of Paul as stern and cold, but clearly he was an emotional and passionate man. The elders had seen Paul's example of godly sorrow. Several times in Scripture we see Paul expressing his deep emotion - (Acts 20:31, 1Cor 2:4, Php 3:18, 2Ti 1:4, cp Jesus Lk 19:41) Indeed, Paul had been in their midst, going "to and fro weeping, carrying his bag of seed", filled with the truth of the Gospel of grace (Cp Ps 126:6).

**John MacArthur** says...

Paul wept because of: 1) those who did not know Christ (cf. Ro 9:2, 3); 2) struggling, immature believers (2Co 2:4); and 3) the threat of false teachers (Acts 20:29, 30). ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word or Logos](#))

**Trials** (3986) (**peirasmos** connotes trouble or something that breaks the pattern of peace, comfort, joy, and happiness in someone's life. Trials rightly faced are harmless and in fact beneficial to the saint as Peter (and James 1 explain), but wrongly met become temptations to evil as explained below. Acts 20:19KJV has **temptations** instead of **trials** and this leads to some confusion in the understanding of the Greek word **peirasmos**. The English word **temptation** originally referred to trials, whether good or bad, but the evil sense has monopolized the word in modern English. **Vincent** adds that it "is a mistake to define this word (peirasmos) as only solicitation to evil. It means trial of any kind, without reference to its moral quality." The context determines whether the intended purpose of the "temptation" is for good or for evil.

Dear follower in the steps of Christ (1Pe 2:21), remember that we must not think that our persecution for the sake of our Lord is something that happens by accident. God allows it just as He did in Paul's life, designing variegated trial's individually suited for each believer's testing, purging, and cleansing.

We do well to remember as Paul must have continually recalled that God brings (or allows) such trials to prove and increase the strength and quality of our faith and to demonstrate its validity (read all of [James 1](#) for full context). Every trial becomes a test of faith designed to strengthen the believer's faith, but if the believer fails the test by wrongly responding, then that test becomes a temptation or a solicitation to evil.

Are you undergoing **trials** for the sake of serving the Lord Jesus Christ? Fret not dear blessed child of God. Be encouraged by Spurgeon's wise words regarding times of affliction...

I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals, and the hand which has thrust me into the heat?... I bear my witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days... I can bear my personal testimony that the best piece of furniture that I ever had in the house was a cross. I do not mean a material cross; I mean the cross of affliction and trouble.... In shunning a trial we are seeking to avoid a blessing.

**The plots of the Jews** (E.g., Acts 13:50; 14:2-7, 19; 17:5-9, 13; 18:6, 12-17; 19:9; 20:3, 2Cor 11:24, 26) - The Ephesian elders knew the full story about the incessant persecution of Paul by his fellow Jews. It is fascinating that the very plot of the Jews at Corinth was led to Paul spending this time with the Ephesian elders (See Acts 20:3). This reminds one of Joseph's words to his brothers who had sold him to slavery...

And as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. (Genesis 50:20)

**Comment:** Perhaps you are being persecuted or going through a time of affliction for His Name's sake. If so, you can be sure that God is able to use your suffering for good, so hold on to Jesus.

**Acts 20:20** how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house: [os ouden hupesteilamen](#) (1SAMI) [ton sumpheronton](#) (PAPNPG) [tou me anaggeilai](#) (AAN) [humin kai didachai](#) (AAN) [humas demosia kai kat' oikous](#):

- **Did not shrink:** Ac 20:27,31 5:2 Dt 4:5 Ps 40:9,10 Eze 33:7-9 1Co 15:3 Col 1:28
- **profitable:** 1Co 12:7 14:6 Php 3:1 2Ti 3:16,17
- **and from:** Ac 20:31 2:46 5:42 Mk 4:34 2Ti 4:2)

**I did not shrink** ("kept nothing back" = KJV) - Absolute negation. Paul was a man filled with the Spirit and thus filled with boldness (a great prayer to pray = Acts 4:29, 31. Acts 2:4, 14, 4:13, 9:27, 28, 29).

**Barclay** sums up Paul's message...

Paul makes certain claims for himself. (i) He had spoken fearlessly. He had told them all God's will and pandered neither to the fear nor the favor of men (ii) He had lived independently. His own hands had supplied

his needs; and his work had been not only for his own sake but for the sake of others who were less fortunate than himself. (iii) He had faced the future gallantly. He was the captive of the Holy Spirit; and in that confidence he was able to brave everything the future might hold.

**Shrink (5288)** (**hupostello** from **hupo** = under + **stéllō** = send or draw) means literally to draw under (out of sight) = draw oneself under = cower or shrink back. **Hupostello** was used for drawing back or down sails on a ship and so slackening the course, and metaphorically meant to be hesitant in doing something, shrinking back, avoiding, unwilling to utter something because of fear (Acts 20:27). Here in Acts 20:20 it means to keep silent about something, an attitude Paul says he did not have. In Gal 2:12 the idea is that of consciously retreated from one's position. In the middle voice, the idea is to withdraw oneself, to cower, to timidly hesitate to avow what one believes, thus expressing a lack of faith (Hebrews 10:38).

Recalling that Luke was a doctor, he may have used **hupostello** as a word play on the medical meaning of withholding food from patients. Figuratively speaking, Paul had never withheld spiritual food, but always sought to "set a full table" of the "whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27).

Dear pastor or teacher, are there some "unpalatable" truths in God's Word that you have "withheld" for fear of causing offense (e.g., election, etc)? May we always strive to be imitators of Paul, even as he was of Christ (1Cor 11:1), for neither withheld any "food" that they knew was necessary for "holistic" spiritual health. Indeed, we must hold back nothing that is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." (2Ti 3:16-note)

**Dean Plumptre** notes that **hupostello**

belongs to the vocabulary of sailors, and was used for taking in or reefing sails. He, Paul seems to say of himself, had used no such reticence or reserve, but had gone on his course, as it were, before the wind, with all his canvas spread. (**Ed thought**: Interesting considering how Jesus described the work and ways of the Holy Spirit in Jn 3:8)

**Brian Bell** quips that Paul was...

Not like some pastors who are "on weekdays invisible and on Sundays incomprehensible." Or the preacher who preaches cream, but he lives skim milk!" ([Sermon](#))

**John Phillips** comments that in order...

To know what Paul set before the Ephesian Christians we have to explore nearly all his epistles, but especially his epistle to the Ephesians. The teaching of Ephesians revolves around the Christian's **wealth**, **walk**, and **warfare**. (**Ed**: Eph 1-3 = Wealth, Eph 4-5 = Walk, Eph 6 = Warfare) Of all Paul's letters, his Ephesian letter climbs the highest heights, plunges to the deepest depths, embraces the profoundest truths. Paul kept nothing back. (John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary)

It is notable that **G. Campbell Morgan's** powerful ministry for the Lord began to prosper after he sequestered himself for two years with his Bible! Is it any wonder men like him had such impact on the lives of others? What did Morgan's blessed ministry focus on that was profitable? Teaching the Word of Truth in power! As I pen these notes, the year is 2012 and I am detecting a subtle trend (and I say this with a spirit of love and not a judgmental spirit) to either "change" or "replace" the actual words of Scripture when writing or preaching. Why? I am not absolutely sure, but it seems to be an attempt to make the Word of God more palatable, more "hip" or more "in step" with our common vernacular. We would all do well to imitate and emulate G Campbell Morgan's example! (cp Pr 30:6, Isa 55:10-11, Jer 23:28, 29, 30, etc)

**Teaching (1321)** (**didasko** from **dáo**= know or teach; English = didactic; see study of related noun **didaskalia** and the adjective **didaktikos**) means to provide instruction or information in a formal or informal setting. In the 97 NT uses of **didasko** the meaning is virtually always to teach or instruct, although the purpose and content of the teaching must be determined from the context.

In Scripture to **teach** means to pass on the truth about the Word of God, the God of the Word and the faith of the saints, with the goal of influencing the understanding and stimulating obedience to the truth taught and resultant Spirit energized transformation and Christ-likeness. The essence of a **disciple** (mathetes, cp Jesus' clear command in Mt 28:18, 19, 20) in fact is that he or she is a learner, and also a "doer" (cp Jas 1:22-note). The teacher teaches and the disciple hears and processes what is heard, so that this truth affects his or her innermost being (i.e., impacting not just the "head" but especially the "heart!"). Ultimately the purpose of **didasko** is to shape the will of the one taught, to cause it to be conformed to the will of God (cp Ro 12:2-note).

**John MacArthur** writes that **didasko**

refers to the passing on of information-often, but not necessarily, in a formal setting. It **focused on content**,

with the purpose of discovering the truth—contrary to the forums so popular among Greeks, where discussion and the bantering about of various ideas and opinions was the primary concern (see Acts 17:21). Synagogue teaching, as illustrated by that of Jesus, was basically expository. Scripture was read and explained section by section, often verse by verse. ([MacArthur, J. Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press or Logos](#)) (Bolding added)

**Publicly and from house to house** - This suggests that the church had both corporate meetings and home meetings. Paul taught in the synagogue (Acts 19:8) and also in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:10).

**From house to house** - Paul was surely one of the greatest preachers of all time and here we see that he preached from **house to house** not making his visits merely social calls, but always seeking to carry out His Lord's kingdom business (cp 1Cor 16:19).

**J Parker** has some interesting pensive comments on **house to house**...

One would like a record of his **house-to-house** talk. To have heard Paul speak on great themes in a little sphere would have been an education. What child has not been fascinated by seeing what appeared to be the whole sun inside a frail dewdrop? And what traveler has not paused a moment to see some kind star condescending enough to hide itself in the depth of a crystal well, as if it were shining in two heavens at once? To have seen Paul at the fireside, or to have heard him talking to some little child, or to have watched him at some bedside near the dying sufferer—to have heard his voice when it was attuned to the hearing of one listener alone!

**Men are seen in little things,  
on small occasions.**

This great Gospel will go anywhere, and be just the same whether drawn on a large scale or a little one.

**Do not be discouraged because you can only discharge a public ministry; and do not you be discouraged because you can only discharge the house-to-house ministry.**

Each man has his own gift of God. Happy he who works his own gift and not another man's, and wise the people who, recognizing the one gift, do not bemoan the absence of other accomplishments.

**Acts 20:21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: [diamarturomenos](#) (PMPMSN) [loudaiois te kai Ellesin ten eis theon metanoian kai pistin eis ton kurion hemon Iesoun:](#)**

- **Testifying:** Ac 20:24, 2:40 8:25, 18:5, 28:23, 1Jn 5:11-13
- **Jews:** Ac 18:4, 19:17 Ro 1:14 1Co 1:22
- **repentance:** Ac 2:38, 3:19, 11:18, 17:30, 26:20 Eze 18:30-32 Mt 3:2, 4:17, 21:31,32 Mk 1:15, 6:12 Lk 13:3,5, 15:7,10, 24:47 Ro 2:4 2Co 7:10 2Ti 2:25,26
- **faith:** Ac 10:43, 13:38,39, 16:31 Jn 3:15-18,36, 20:31, Ro 1:16, 3:22-26, 4:24 Ro 5:1, 10:9 Ga 2:16,20 3:22 1Jn 5:1,5,11-13

## SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING THE GOSPEL OF GRACE

**Solemnly testifying** (present tense = continually) ([1263](#)) ([diamarturomai](#) from **diá** = intensifies meaning conveying idea of "thoroughly" + **martúromai** = witness, bear witness) means to bear witness, to testify earnestly or repeatedly, to charge as if before witnesses (e.g., God and Christ Jesus), to exhort earnestly and with authority in matters of extraordinary importance (here the integrity of the Gospel message of **repentance** and **faith** he proclaimed). The solemnity of our testimony recognizes the serious danger of every soul not yet hidden in Christ, the "Ark" of eternal security.

**To both Jews and Greeks** - Every person was a "mission field" to Paul, for every person was in need of the Gospel of the grace of God. Are we "selective" in who we consider our mission field. Do we consider some people like the "untouchables" in India? Paul's Gospel knew no bias or prejudice. And don't miss it -- even to the **Jews**, the very ones who plotted and persecuted Paul! (Acts 20:19) They needed the Gospel also! As Paul declared to the saints at Corinth...

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2Cor 5:20-note)

**THE GOSPEL  
IN A NUTSHELL**



**Repentance...faith** - Is this not Luke's "shorthand" for the **Gospel**? How dangerous to drop "repentance" from the proclamation! **Dear pastor, have you jettisoned "repentance" because of some perverse, clever argument of a so called ivory tower Biblical scholar?** If so, you had best return to the pattern proclaimed solemnly by the great apostle Paul and also by his Lord Who unapologetically proclaimed...

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** (present imperative) and **believe** (pisteuo = present imperative) in the Gospel." (Mark 1:15, cp Mt 4:17, Lk 3:8, 5:32, 24:47, Acts 26:20, cp John the Baptist = Mt 3:2, ) (See also Spurgeon's comments below)

**Repentance** (3341)(**metanoia** from **meta** = after + **noéo** = to understand) literally means "afterthought" or "to think after" and thus comes to signify a change of mind. From the NT uses, it is clear that **metanoia** means not only a change of mind but includes a change of heart, attitude, interest, and direction. Repentance is the change wrought by God in one's heart when they realize that they have disobeyed His laws. **Metanoia** includes the idea of a **conversion** (from Latin "*convertere*" = to turn around, transform) in every sense of the word. Jesus' teaching would support this conclusion for our Lord declared...

I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** (**metanoëo**), than over ninety-nine righteous persons (speaking of "self" righteousness) who need no **repentance** (**metanoia**) (That is they "think" they need not truly repent!). (Luke 15:7)

Near the end of Acts Paul reviewed his ministry before King Agrippa writing that he...

kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should **repent** and **turn** (**epistrepho**) to God, performing deeds appropriate (**axios**) to repentance. (Acts 26:20)

**Comment:** Notice that while deeds don't save anyone, deeds are evidence of the authenticity of one's repentance and faith.

**Related Resource:** [Great quotes on repentance primarily from Puritan writers](#)

**Bishop Ryle** offers this descriptive definition of **repentance**...

**Repentance** is a thorough change of man's natural heart, upon the subject of sin. We are all born in sin. We naturally love sin. We take to sin, as soon as we can act and think—just as the bird takes to flying, and the fish takes to swimming. There never was a child that required schooling or education in order to learn deceitfulness, selfishness, passion, self-will, gluttony, pride, and foolishness. These things are not picked up from bad companions, or gradually learned by a long course of tedious instruction. They spring up of themselves, even when boys and girls are brought up alone. The seeds of them are evidently the natural product of the heart. The aptitude of all children to these evil things is an unanswerable proof of the corruption and fall of man. Now when this heart of ours is changed by the Holy Spirit, when this natural love of sin is cast out, then takes place that change which the Word of God calls "**repentance**." The man in whom the change is wrought is said to "repent." ([Repentance](#))

One of the best illustrations of **genuine repentance** is found in Paul's description of the **saints** at Thessalonica...

For they themselves (other believers in Macedonia and Achaia) report about us (Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) what kind of a reception we had with you, and **how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven**, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. (1Thessalonians 1:9; 1:10-See **notes** 1Th 1:9; 1:10)

**Comment:** Note the order - first, to God and by "default" from idols.

**C H Spurgeon** in a sermon entitled The Plumline (Amos 7:7, 8) wrote that...

Side by side with that **faith**, God puts **true repentance**. When a man attempts to convert his fellow-man, he gives him a sham repentance, or perhaps he tells him that there is no need of any repentance at all. Certain preachers have been telling us, lately, that it is a very easy matter to obtain salvation, and that there is no need of repentance; or if repentance is needed, it is merely a change of mind. That is not the doctrine that our fathers used to preach, nor the doctrine that we have believed. That faith, which is not accompanied by repentance, will have to be repented of; so, whenever God builds, he builds repentance fair and square with faith. These two things go together; the man just as much regrets and grieves over the past as he sees that past obliterated by the precious blood of Jesus. He just as much hates all his sin as he believes that his sin has been all put away. (Amos 7:7-8 The Plumline)

**William MacDonald** remarks that...

In many NT passages, faith alone is stated to be the condition of salvation. However, faith presupposes repentance. How could a person truly accept Jesus Christ as Savior unless he realized that he needed a Savior? This realization, brought about by the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, is repentance. ([MacDonald, W & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#) or [Logos](#))

**Brian Bell**...

Repentance and Faith must go together to complete each other like a door & its post.3.7.1. Repentance is the door which shuts out our sin. Faith is the post on which its hinges are fixed. A door w/o a doorpost to hang on...is not a door at all. A doorpost w/o the door hanging on it...is of no value whatever. "What God has joined together, let no man separate!" Repentance = turning from sin; Faith = trusting Christ for salvation. Let go of sin, lay hold of Christ! Patrick Morley writes that the church's integrity problem is in the misconception "that we can add Christ to our lives, but not subtract sin. It is a change in belief without a change in behavior." ([Sermon](#))

**Faith** ([4102](#))(*pistis*) speaks of trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of anything. Here in Acts 20:21, Paul is speaks of belief respecting man's relationship to the God-Man Christ Jesus. Biblical faith (faith that saves a soul) is not simply mental assent to the truth one hears which by itself is a superficial "faith" at best and not genuine (saving) faith. I see a chair. I intellectually believe that it will hold me up. However, for my belief to be shown to be real, I need to sit in the chair.

**Ray Stedman** writes that...

Repentance is looking at the way you have been living -- at what you have been drawing upon, at your dependence upon the old life -- and changing your mind. That is what repentance means. To repent means to stop thinking and acting and living the way you have been. Instead, step out in faith. Trust the living Lord who is in you to operate through you, and venture out, move out!

The Christian life is intended to be exciting, compelling, always interesting, always different, always lived on the verge of adventure and danger. That is why it must be characterized by **faith**. So, you see, there are the two basic steps, and you must take them over and over again.

**The way you begin the Christian life is to repent and believe.  
And that also constitutes your walk through the Christian life.**

A walk is more than a single step. When faced with a situation, you should take the first step and repent, think through the old way of life and say to yourself, "I've been going at this the wrong way." But that is not yet a walk. You must take the next step and believe, have faith, trust in the work of God in you. Then, on the next occasion that comes, you go through the same procedure over again -- you repent, and then believe -- repent and believe -- repent and believe -- and you are walking! That is what the Christian life is all about. In every circumstance, every situation, this is the two-fold way by which the **Christian lives in the power of a living Go ++\*-d: repent and believe**. Now the apostle goes on to give another characteristic of his ministry among them: ([Last Words](#))

**Related resources:**

- Obedience of faith in Ro 1:5, 16:25
- Relationship of faith and obedience

**Wuest** explains that...

When these words (*pistis*, *pisteuo*, *pistos*) refer to the **faith** which a lost sinner must place in the Lord Jesus in order to be saved, they include the following ideas;

the act of considering the Lord Jesus worthy of trust as to His character and motives,

the act of placing confidence in His ability to do just what He says He will do,

the act of entrusting the salvation of his soul into the hands of the Lord Jesus,

the act of committing the work of saving his soul to the care of the Lord.

This means a definite taking of one's self out of one's own keeping and entrusting one's self into the keeping of the Lord Jesus. ([Wuest, K. S. Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: Studies in the](#)

## [Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans\)](#)

For those of us who have genuinely been saved (justified) by God's grace through authentic faith, we need to remember that this same "faith" is what now sanctifies us! We tend to forget Paul's exhortation to the saints at Colossae "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col 2:6-note). How did they receive Him? By faith. How are they (and us) to walk in Him? By faith (2Cor 5:7-note). Writing to the churches in Galatia, Paul ask them rhetorically...

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by **hearing with faith**? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected (brought to the goal of Christ-likeness) by the flesh? (Answer? Absolutely not!)...5 For we through the Spirit, **by faith**, are waiting for the hope of righteousness...7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying (not legalistically but enabled by the Spirit, by faith) the truth? (Gal 3:2, 3, 5:5, 7)

How are you doing in your sanctification process dear saint? Are you trying to please God with your own fleshly efforts? Remember, only Christ pleases the Father. Filled with His Spirit (the Spirit of Christ) (Eph 5:18-note), practice walking by His Spirit, and then and only then, will you not carry out the desire of the flesh (Gal 5:16-note). Only by abiding in the Vine by grace through faith will you be pleasing to God and bear fruit that will endure eternally (Jn 15:5, 8, 16).

**Maclaren** writes that

**Faith** is the hand that grasps. It is the means of communication, it is the channel through which the grace which is the life, or, rather, I should say, the life which is the grace, comes to us. It is the open door by which the angel of God comes in with his gifts. It is like the petals of the flowers, opening when the sunshine kisses them, and, by opening, laying bare the depths of their calyxes to be illuminated and coloured, and made to grow by the sunshine which itself has opened them, and without the presence of which, within the cup, there would have been neither life nor beauty. So faith is the basis of everything; the first shoot from which all the others ascend...**Faith works**. It is the foundation of all true work; even in the lowest sense of the word we might almost say that. But in the Christian scheme it is eminently the underlying requisite for all work which God does not consider as busy idleness...

**Your work of faith**. There is the whole of the thorny subject of the relation of faith and works packed into a nutshell. It is exactly what James said and it is exactly what a better than James said. When the Jews came to Him with their externalism, and thought that God was to be pleased by a whole rabble of separate good actions, and so said, 'What shall we do that we might work the works of God?' Jesus said, 'Never mind about Works. This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent,' and out of that will come all the rest. That is the mother tincture; everything will flow from that. So Paul says, 'Your work of faith.'

Does your faith work? Perhaps I should ask other people rather than you. Do men see that your faith works; that its output is different from the output of men who are not possessors of a 'like precious faith'? Ask yourselves the question, and God help you to answer it. (Read full sermon on 1 Thessalonians 1:3)

**Wayne Grudem** defines **faith** that saves one's soul...

**Saving faith** is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God. This definition emphasizes that saving faith is not just a belief in facts but personal trust in Jesus to save me... The definition emphasizes personal trust in Christ, not just belief in facts about Christ. Because saving faith in Scripture involves this personal trust, the word "trust" is a better word to use in contemporary culture than the word "faith" or "belief." The reason is that we can "believe" something to be true with no personal commitment or dependence involved in it. ([Grudem, W. A. Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine Zondervan](#)) (Bolding added)

**Related Resources:**

- Multiple articles (Spurgeon, Ryle, Watson, Brooks, et al) @ [Saving Faith](#)
- Spurgeon on belief [John 8:30-32 Believing On Jesus. And Its Counterfeits](#)
- Alexander Maclaren on [John 8:30, 31 Three Aspects of Faith](#)

**Two Necessary Things for All**

**I. Repentance** - A ladder of sorrow, by which we descend into the depths of our own hearts: it has three steps.

1. Knowledge of sin.

2. Sorrow for it.

3. Desire of salvation from it.

**II. Faith** - A heavenly ladder, on which we mount to God and eternity; it has also three steps.

1. Knowledge that the Redeemer has come.

2. Holy joy that He has taken up His abode with us.

3. Unshaken confidence in His saving grace. (Lisco)

Acts 20:22 "And now, **behold**, bound in **spirit** (or **Spirit**), I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there: **kai nun idou** (2SAMM) **dedemenos** (RPPMSN) **ego to pneumat** **poreuomai** (1SPMI) **eis lerousalem, ta en aute sunantesonta** (FAPNPA) **moi me eidos**, (RAPMSN) :

- **Bound in spirit**: Acts 19:21, 21:11-14 Luke 9:51, 12:50 2Co 5:14
- **not**: Luke 18:31-33 Jn 13:1, 18:4 Jas 4:14, 2Pe 1:14

## PAUL WAS A BOUND MAN!

**And now** - Whenever you encounter an **expression of time**, be sure to question it (**5W/H'S**). Here Paul shifts from review of his **past practices** (summarized in Acts 20:18-21) to the **future prospects** that awaited him (Acts 20:22-27).

**Behold** (**idou**) - This interjection should always arrest our attention. "Stop! Listen up" is the idea" in both the Old and the New Testaments. **Behold** always serves to emphasize what follows (and so it provides an opportunity to query the text -- Why? What are we to behold?, etc.)

**Bound in spirit** - The NAS does not capitalize "spirit" which reflects the interpretation of the translators that Luke is not referencing the Holy Spirit. However, several other translations favor this as a reference to the Holy Spirit and thus capitalize Spirit rendering Luke's phrase "**compelled by the Spirit**" (NET, NIV, NAB) or "**constrained by the Spirit**" (ESV).

**Bound** (1210)(**deo**) literally meant to tie objects together and figuratively could refer to confining someone in prison (Mk 15:7) or to cause someone to be under authority of someone or something else (Ro 7:2). The **NLT** paraphrase gives us the sense of what Paul meant by **bound in spirit** rendering it as "drawn there irresistibly" and the **perfect tense** indicates that this was Paul's permanent state. This is not surprising for he repeatedly referred to himself as a **bondservant** (*doulos*) and as one who **served** (*douleuo*) his Lord (Acts 20:19), both words originating from **deo**. In short Paul was a man irrevocably and intimately bound to Christ Jesus His Master. Paul as the Lord's bondservant conveys the idea of his close tie to Jesus his Lord, his acknowledgement that he belonged to Him and his desire to lovingly do His master's will. In short, the will of Paul the "bound one" was consumed in the will of his Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. Whether by the Spirit or his own spirit, Paul was constrained by a compulsion which he could not "shake" that he was to continue on to Jerusalem

What about you beloved? Are you a "bound" man or woman? Would you call yourself the Lord's bondservant? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit compel your spirit? Is your will consumed and subsumed by His good and acceptable and perfect will? Yield to the Spirit of Christ. Heed His invitation (He is speaking to the church!) Take Jesus' yoke. Abide in Him as your sustaining, invigorating Vine (Jn 15:5) and live life to the full just as did the apostle Paul, a bound man!

**On my way to Jerusalem** - The NET Bible Notes that "This journey to Jerusalem suggests a parallel between Paul and Jesus, since the "Jerusalem journey" motif figures so prominently in Luke's Gospel" (cp "set His face to go to Jerusalem" Lk 9:51KJVff)

**Knowing** (1492)(**eido**) is a perception, a being aware of, an understanding, an intuitive knowledge which in believers is given by the Holy Spirit. **Eido/oida** suggests a fullness of knowledge, an absolute knowledge which is beyond a shadow of a doubt. In this case Paul did not know the specific details but as he states in the next verse, he knew the general tenor of what he would encounter -- "**bonds and afflictions!**" The prophecy of Agabus in Acts 21:10, 11 would give Paul more specific details of the persecution awaiting him in Jerusalem.

**NOT  
KNOWING**

This phrase from the lips of Paul reveals one of the things that, through very varied experience, he had come to know. He knew that there were things in his program that he did not know. Locally, the phrase was expressive of uncertainty as to the reception he would receive in Jerusalem.

**But its chief value for us lies in the fact that it is so used as to show that such ignorance did not interfere with the certainties of the future.**

He had received a ministry from the Lord Jesus, and the one and only thing that concerned him was that he should accomplish (finish) that ministry (Acts 20:24). What lay in the course (the race), of bonds or affliction, or even death, mattered nothing; the doing of the appointed work was supreme (**Ed**: But don't misinterpret this Paul's doing, for Paul's **doing** was always a fruit of his **being**, his abiding in the Vine, an outgrowth of the enabling power of the Spirit of Christ energizing Christ's life in and through him). Thus there is the touch of a splendid carelessness in the words "**not knowing**"; a carelessness as to minor matters, born of a constant carefulness as to the principal matter (**Ed**: In other words the **minor** was ever overshadowed by the **major**). Thus the "**not knowing**" of Paul meant not caring to know, not asking to know; indeed, it meant preferring not to know. That is the true attitude of all who are walking in an appointed course, in the service of the Lord. We know **Whose we are** and **Whom we serve**. (**Ed**: Note the order - first *Whose we are* then *Whom we serve*. **Being** should always precedes **doing**.) We know the way of His will for us. As to the rest, we can say **not knowing**; and that is the ignorance of a perfect rest (cp Mt 11:28-30-note). (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible)

Acts 20:23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me: [plen hoti to pneuma to hagion kata polin diamarturetai \(3SPMI\) moi legon \(PAPNSN\) oti desma kai thlipseis me menousin. \(3PPAI\)](#)

- **Holy Spirit**: Acts 9:16, 14:22, 21:4,11 Jn 16:33 1Th 3:3 2Ti 2:12)

**“Through many tribulations  
we must enter the kingdom of God.”**

**Acts 14:22**

**The Holy Spirit solemnly testifies** - Paul knew that difficult times of testing were coming. Subsequent history would prove Paul had about 10 more years before Nero beheaded him (the tradition most accept). The Holy Spirit, speaking to the original readers (by application to all disciples of Christ) of Peter's first epistle warns us...

Beloved, **do not be surprised** (present imperative = a command with negative = don't let this start happening or stop an action already occurring) at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; but to the degree that you **share the sufferings of Christ** (cp Col 1:24-note), keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation (Read Mt 5:10-12-note; Php1:29-note; Php 3:10-note; Ro 8:17-note, 2Co 1:7, 4:10-note). If you are reviled (reproached, insulted, slandered, assailed with abuse) for the name of Christ (Note this "qualifying" caveat!), you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1Pe 4:12, 13-note, 1Pe 4:14-note)

**The Holy Spirit** - Observe that the Holy Spirit spoke to Paul. I think we do the Spirit and ourselves a disservice to think He would not desire to speak to us as well! **Lord give us hears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church, Christ's Body, in these last days. Amen** (See Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29, 3:6, 13, 22)

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9-note, cp Acts 16:7, Php 1:19-note, Gal 4:6), the One Jesus referred to as "another (allos = of the same kind) Helper" (Jn 14:16). Jesus had ascended in Acts 1 but His kingdom work was far from finished. Therefore in Acts 2, the Spirit of Jesus had descended to empower (cp Acts 1:8-note) the work of Christ through His body, the Church. Church, notice how we began!

How are we doing today Church, Body of Christ? Is the Church in America relying on the same power that fueled the spread of the Gospel in the book of Acts? If not why not? And should we be surprised if we are not radically impacting our godless progressively corrupting American culture? Beloved, we began by Jesus' sending of His Holy Spirit and we must run by that same Spirit! (Beloved if you are unsure how you would

answer this question, consider reading Francis Chan's thoughtful challenge to the modern church in his book - [Forgotten God Reversing Our Tragic Neglect of the Holy Spirit](#)

## THE GOSPEL: NEVER CHANGING NEVER LESSENING.

**Joseph Parker** comments on the phrase **in every city**...

"**In every city—bonds—afflictions.**" What a tribute to the sustaining power of the doctrine he had taught! The bonds were many, the afflictions were heavy; what outweighed them all? The sense of God's presence and God's favor. If one thing above another has been demonstrated by Christian history, it is that the Christian spirit may be so vital in a man as to make him forget all care and pain and labour and sorrow, and make him triumph and glory in tribulation also. What comforted Paul will comfort us. This is the eternal quantity of the **Gospel—never changing, never lessening.**

## SECRET OF THE BLESSED CHRISTIAN LIFE

**F B Meyer** writes...

The secret of a blessed Christian experience is to live in the power of this truth, that the Holy Spirit is literally the Lord, as He is the Giver, of Life (cp Jn 6:63).

Sometimes He will direct us towards individuals, as when He said unto Philip, " Go near, and join thyself to this chariot " (Acts 8:29); at other times, we shall be bound in the Spirit to go up unto Jerusalem, knowing that bonds and afflictions await us, **but not able to draw back** (Acts 20:22-23).

The note and mark of His Rule are always the crucifixion of the self-life to the glorification of the Christ-life and the combination of circumstances, which lock with His inspirations, as the wards of a lock with its key. Whether to act or rest, whether to speak or be still, whether to go in or go out, all will be made clear by the witness and leading of the Spirit in the depths of our heart. (The Creed of Creeds)

**Afflictions** ([2347](#))(**thlipsis** from **thlibo** = to crush, press together, squash, hem in, compress, squeeze in turn derived from **thláo** = to break) originally expressed sheer, physical pressure on a man. **Thlipsis** is a strong term which does not refer to minor inconveniences, but to real hardships. Medically **thlipsis** was used of the pulse (pressure). Thlipsis was used to describe the pressing together as of grapes and thus conveys the picture of being squeezed or placed under pressure or crushed beneath a weight! When, according to the ancient law of England, those who willfully refused to plead guilty, had heavy weights placed on their breasts, and were pressed and crushed to death, this was literally **thlipsis**. The iron cage was **stenochoria**. **Thlipsis** thus refers not to mild discomfort but to great difficulties, something Paul experienced **in every city!**

As **Joseph Alleine** said "Times of affliction are usually gaining times to God's people."

When we as children of God stray, as a loving Father, He disciplines us. In times like these affliction is God's shepherd dog to drive us back to the fold. And while we may not like the afflictions at the moment, in time we come to be thankful for His afflictions which are often His best blessings sent in disguise! Indeed, someone has well said that our great Teacher writes many a bright lesson on the "blackboard of affliction."

**The Puritan writer Thomas Brooks** said it well...

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night. Torches are the better for beating. Grapes come not to the proof till they come to the press. Spices smell sweetest when pounded. Young trees root the faster for shaking. Vines are the better for bleeding. Gold looks the brighter for scouring; and juniper smells sweeter in the fire.

**Spurgeon** echoes Brooks thoughts...

I am afraid that all the grace that I have got out of my comfortable and easy times and happy hours might almost lie on a penny. But the good that I have received from my sorrows, and pains, and griefs, is altogether incalculable. What do I not owe to the crucible and the furnace, the bellows that have blown up the coals, and the hand which has thrust me into the heat?...Our troubles have always brought us blessings, and they always will. They are the dark chariots of bright grace....The tears of affliction are often needed to keep the eye of faith bright.

In **Jesus'** last words to His disciples He too spoke of the great "affliction" (the Cross) He would soon face and encouraged His men

who would soon also experience afflictions for the sake of His Name...

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation (**thlipsis**), but **take courage** (present imperative - command to make this attitude their lifestyle - How possible? They would soon have Another Helper, implying that Jesus had been their "Helper", and the Holy Spirit would strengthen them in their inner manner with power - Acts 1:8-note, Eph 3:16-note) ; I have overcome the world."

**Comment:** Beloved, let us hear and take to heart, Paul's example of facing afflictions and Jesus' warning and encouragement regarding coming affliction. The Christian life is not a picnic, but a war. We have three inveterate moral enemies - the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil**. Paul in his last recorded words gave Timothy a prophetic promise which was also a warning of coming afflictions declaring "indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2Ti 3:12-note)

**Acts 20:24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the Gospel of the grace of God: [all' oudenos logou poioumai \(1SPMI\) ten psuchen timian emauto os teleiosai \(AAN\) ton dromon mou kai ten diakonian en elabon \(1SAAI\) para tou kuriou Iesou, diamarturasthai \(AMN\) to euaggelion tes charitos tou theou.](#)"**

- Ac 21:13 Ro 8:35-39 1Co 15:58 2Co 4:1,8,9,16-18, 6:4-10, 7:4, 12:10 Eph 3:13 1Th 2:2, 3:3 2Ti 1:12, 3:11 4:17 Heb 10:34, 12:1-3
- **Account:** Co 5:8 Php 1:20-23, 2:17, Col 1:24 1Jn 3:16 Rev 12:11
- **might:** Jn 17:4 1Co 9:24-27 Php 3:13-15 2Ti 4:6-8
- **and the ministry:** Ac 1:17, 9:15, 22:21 26:17,18 1Co 9:17,18 2Co 4:1 Ga 1:1 Titus 1:3
- **testify solemnly:** Ac 20:21 Jn 15:27 Heb 2:3,4
- **Gospel of the grace of God:** Ac 14:3 Luke 2:10,11 Ro 3:24-26, 4:4, 5:20,21, 11:6 Eph 1:6, 2:4-10 Titus 2:11, 3:4-7 1Pe 5:12

## THE SECRET OF PAUL'S STRONG FINISH

2Ti 4:7-note

**But (term of contrast)** should always prompt at least one question - What is being contrasted? (Why?, etc). In the present context, Paul is contrasting the reality of the certainty of "**bonds and afflictions**" with the reality of his attitude of accepting whatever the good hand of the Lord brings. This is clearly the heart of one who knows that he is not his own but has been bought with the price of the precious blood of Christ and that the purpose of his life is now to glorify God (1Cor 6:19-note, 1Cor 6:20-note, Titus 2:14-note, 1Pe 1:18, 19-note, Mt 5:16-note) And as we read about Paul, we need to remember his charge to the believers in Corinth (and by application to us today) to

**Be** (present imperative = command to make this one's lifestyle, something possible only as we yield to and are enabled by the Holy Spirit) imitators of me, just as I am of Christ." (1Cor 11:1)

**Will imitating Paul and Jesus involve suffering for the Name above all names?** It is a guarantee, but enabled by the same Spirit Who empowered Paul, we must not shrink from the high and holy call upon each of our lives! (Cp 2Ti 3:12-note, Phil 1:29-note) You are not really ready to live for Christ until you are willing to die for Christ.

## TO LIVE = CHRIST TO DIE = GAIN

Php 1:21-note

**I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself**- Paul presents a proper perspective for our short life on earth!

**Nothing, absolutely nothing  
deters Paul from his holy purpose!**

"I do not consider my life worth anything to myself" (NET), "But I count my life of no value to myself" (HCSB), "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself" (ESV), "But I do not place any value on my own life." (NJB). For a similar sentiment by Paul see 2Cor 4:7-12-note, 2Cor 6:4-10, 2Cor 12:9, 10-note, Php 1:20, 21-note, Php 2:17-note, Php 3:8-note, Col 1:24-note. Paul knew he was not his own, but that his life belonged to Jesus in Whose hands he was a "**chosen instrument.**" (Acts 9:15). O for all

of God's possessions to possess such a passionate persuasion!

**My life** - Literally "my soul!"

**Albert Barnes** comments that what Paul is saying in essence is that

"Duty is of more importance than life; and when either duty or life is to be sacrificed, life is to be cheerfully surrendered."

**John Phillips** comments that...

because of his resolve to go to Jerusalem, much of his remaining time would be spent in prison. Paul, however, looked at life from a higher perspective than most of us. Self-preservation was not high on his list of priorities. He was prepared to lose both liberty and life itself in the cause of Christ. As he had told the Romans in his recent letter, he considered himself "killed all the day long" for the cause of Christ, accounting himself "as a sheep for the slaughter" (Ro 8:36-note). The important thing was to fulfill the ministry entrusted to him and to bear universal witness in life or death, to Jew and Gentile, to the good news of the grace of God. (Ibid)

**John Piper** comments...

Any constellation of goals that you choose to live for will leave a craving vacuum in your soul if GOD is not the pole star in that constellation guiding and shaping all your choices. God was the lodestar of Paul's life, and the glory of God was the light of that immense and blazing star, and all the other aims of his life were like moons whose only light and attraction were the light they reflected of that star. ([A Cause to Live For - Desiring God](#))

**Chuck Smith** comments on not considering his **life** of any **account as dear**...

Very few can make the statement that Paul made, for most of us do count our lives dear to ourselves. We want to hang on to life as long as possible. We exercise, take pills, so as to prolong our life. We even spend thousands of dollars a day to put our loved ones on life support systems so that we can keep them technically alive, long after they have really died, because we count life so dear...

**Why is it that we count our lives dear?** Because we have no concept of how wonderful heaven is. This is reflected in our attitude toward a Christian who has died, especially if it is a young person or a child. We somehow feel that they were cheated for they died before they had a chance to really experience life. Yes, they have missed out on so much grief, pain, sorrow, trials, pressure, fear, anxiety. There they are in the total bliss of heaven, where there are no tears, sorrow or pain, enjoying the eternal pleasures, poor souls. Think of all they have missed. ([Chuck Smith - Sermon Notes](#))

**So that - term of explanation** - Paul is explaining why his physical life did not matter. He now presents the primary motive of his life, his main objective! What mattered was that he might carry out the task God had given him, no matter what the cost!

## **ONE LIFE TO LIFE ONE RACE TO RUN**

**Finish** ([5048](#))(**teleioo** related to **teleios** from **telos** = an end, a purpose, an aim, a goal, consummate soundness, idea of being whole) means to accomplish or bring to an end or to the intended goal (telos), the goal of which in the case of Paul and all believers is **Christ-likeness**. And fittingly, in Hebrews 12:2 (note), Jesus is designated as "the Author and **Perfector** of the faith" where Perfector is **teleiotes**, the Completer, the One Who reached the goal so as to win the prize so to speak. Teleioo thus means to be complete, mature, fully developed, full grown, brought to its end, finished, wanting nothing necessary to completeness. It does not mean simply to terminate something but to carry it out until fully finished (this thought is conveyed by the translation "perfected").

**My course** (my race) - The phrase "**my course**" indicates Paul understood and took possession of the truth that this was his own race, not someone else's race. Not only does "**my course**" indicate **my possession** but also connotes **my responsibility** to run the race God has laid out for each of us.

### **Do you see your short life (in light of eternity) as a race to be run?**

Note well that each believer has a "custom course" specifically designed by God Himself (this meaning is clearly conveyed in the phrase "**the race that is set before us**" in Heb 12:1-note) and that is the "lane" in which we are to run **for His glory** (cp "good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" - Eph 2:10-note). In other words, God has a "lane" for each of His children to run in and a goal for each one to reach. We are **not** competing with each other. We are competing (in a sense) with



ourselves (e.g., under grace denying self, cp Mk 8:34, 35) and striving to press on toward the goal for the prize God has set before us (cp Php 3:14-note). Remember, we are not running the race in order to get into heaven. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that our sins are forgiven and we have the assurance of heaven (Jn 14:1-6). In the Greek and Roman games, the contestants had to be citizens and no slaves or outsiders were permitted to compete. In the Christian race, each runner is already a citizen of heaven (Php 3:20-note) and is running to bring glory to the Lord. (Mt 5:16-note)

**Take a moment and meditate on Paul's metaphorical descriptions of our life and ministry in Christ as a race we are to run in such a way that we win** - 1Co 9:24-27-note, Gal 2:2, Gal 5:7, Php 2:16-note, Php 3:13, 14-note, 2Ti 4:7-note (cp Heb 12:1-note)

**Finish my course with joy** - The Greek Textus Receptus has "*meta charas*" which the KJV translates "with joy." (Acts 20:24KJV) This phrase is not found in more modern Greek texts and thus is not translated in the NAS, ESV, etc.

**My course (my race)** (1408)(**dromos** from **dramein**, the aorist infinitive form of **trecho** = to run) refers to the course that one follows in a race and figuratively refers to one's purpose in life and obligations in relation to it. Our lives are represented as a race that is to be run, not a party to be celebrated. Inherent in the picture of our **life as a race** are ideas like intentionality, continuity, diligence, effort, counting of the cost, denial of self, etc. **The question we all need to ask ourselves is "Am I running well?" Do you see yourself like Paul as a runner who desires to finish well, to finish with joy?**

**"Have I laid aside every encumbrance** (unnecessary weight or baggage = anything that impedes disciplining myself for godliness 1Ti4:7,8-note), **and the sin which so easily entangles" me so that I might be able to "run with endurance the race that is set before" me?** (He 12:1-note) **And most importantly am I continually fixing my eyes on my great Example, Jesus, the Author and the Finisher of the faith** (Heb 12:2-note)?

May God grant us His Spirit's supernatural grace to enable us to say like Paul...

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course (**dromos**), I have kept the faith in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2Ti 4:7-note, 2Ti 4:8-note)

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul had issued another strong warning using which also used an athletic metaphor...

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified. (1Co 9:24-note, 1Co 9:25-note, 1Co 9:26-note, 1Co 9:27-note)

#### **Related Resources:**

- The Heavenly Race by Thomas Watson
- [The Unwearied Runner by C H Spurgeon](#)

Many believers start out on the right **course**, but with time are diverted from the track God originally set them on. When we are born into God's kingdom our race begins and our course is set and one day when we enter God's presence our race ends. The interval of our brief sojourn on earth is the time we each have to complete our set spiritual **course**. If we stray from our **course** we lose valuable time. The only way to complete our course within the allotted time is to stay on course! Don't be like the Galatians of whom Paul said

You were running well; who hindered (NIV "cut in on") you from obeying the truth? (Gal 5:7)

Paul's life would have pleased the track coach who said "If you have anything left ten yards past the finish line, you didn't give your all." What about us? Each of our lives are "like flowering grass" and will soon "pass away" (Jas 1:10-note) which should motivate us like Paul to give no less than our best to the Lord.

**C H Spurgeon** writes that ...

the Apostle regarded life as a race which he had to run. Now, the more quickly a race is run, the better—certainly, length is not the object or desire. The one thought of a runner is how he can most speedily reach the winning post. He spurns the ground beneath him; he cares not for the course he traverses except so far as it is the way over which he must run to reach his desired end. Such was life to Paul—all the energies of his spirit were consecrated to the pursuit of one objective—namely, that he might, everywhere, bear testimony to **the**

**Gospel of the Grace of God**—and the life which he lived here below was only valued by him as a means to that end. He also regarded the Gospel and His ministry in witnessing to it, as a sacred deposit which had been committed to him by the Lord, Himself. He looked upon himself “as put in trust with the Gospel” and he resolved to be faithful though it should cost him his life.

He says he “**desired to fulfill the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus Christ**.” Before his mind’s eye he saw the Savior taking into His pierced hands the priceless case which contains the celestial jewel of the Grace of God and saying to him—“I have redeemed you with My blood and I have called you by My name—and now I commit this precious thing into your hands, that you may take care of it and guard it with your heart’s blood. I commission you to go everywhere in My place and to make known to every people under Heaven the Gospel of the Grace of God.” All Believers occupy a somewhat similar place. We are, none of us, called to the Apostleship—and we may not all have been called to the public preaching of the Word of God—but we are all charged to be valiant for the Truth of God upon the earth and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. Oh, to do this in the spirit of the Apostle of the Gentiles! ([A Gospel Worth Dying For](#))

**Pastor Steven Cole** offers some excellent insights on what it takes to **finish the course**...

**(1) To finish the course**, you must put the ministry that you received from the Lord above even life itself...

To finish the course, you must recognize that God has entrusted a ministry to you. There is no such thing in the Bible as a Christian without a ministry! ( We have fallen into a wrong way of thinking, where some who are super-committed go into “the ministry,” but everyone else just putters around at serving the Lord in their spare time as volunteers. It is significant that every time in Scripture that the subject of spiritual gifts is mentioned, it uses the word “each” or “every” (Ro 12:3; 1Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7, 16; 1Pet. 4:10). As Peter puts it, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Every Christian has received a gift from God. Every Christian will give an account to God of his stewardship in using that gift for God’s purposes, as Jesus taught in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30).

Thus whether you’re a waiter, an accountant, a carpenter, or a housewife, if you’re a Christian you must see yourself as being in the ministry, just as I’m in the ministry. I happen to get supported by my ministry and you may not. In that matter, you are more like the apostle Paul than I am! He chose to work in a “secular” job to pay his bills. Ministry is not just a task or sphere of service; it is a mentality or way of thinking that permeates all of life. Seeing yourself in the ministry means that you are available to God 24-7, to use you to help others draw near to God. It may mean serving someone in a practical way by meeting a need. It may mean sharing the gospel with an unbeliever or encouraging a believer by listening to his problems or by sharing relevant Scriptures. You can minister through giving or through prayer. But whatever form it takes, ministry means not focusing on yourself, but on others by being available to God to work through your life. You won’t fulfill the ministry that God has given you if you aren’t even aware that you are in the ministry! But, you are!...

**(2) To finish the course**, you must recognize that you are a conscript, not a volunteer....

**(3) To finish the course**, you must sign over your life to Jesus Christ, expecting hardship as you follow Him....When James Calvert went out as a missionary to the cannibals of the Fiji Islands, the captain of the ship sought to turn him back. “You will lose your life and the lives of those with you if you go among such savages,” he cried. Calvert replied, “We died before we came here.” Those faithful missionaries had signed over their lives to Jesus...

We should live each day all-out for the Lord, knowing that if He brings trials into our lives, He will also give us the grace to endure them. But we must live in light of eternity, not for the fleeting pleasures of this life only. The only way to live in light of eternity is to be totally abandoned to Jesus Christ here and now, trusting in Him in every trial...

**(4) To finish the course**, you must keep the finish line in view: faithfulness to the gospel of God’s grace....

**(5) To finish the course**, you must feed on and proclaim the whole purpose of God (Acts 20:27). [Sermon-Recommended](#)

[WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS — By Isaac Watts, Vocal by Kathryn Scott](#)

When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,  
Save in the death of Christ my God!  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See from His head, His hands, His feet,  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

His dying crimson, like a robe,  
Spreads o'er His body on the tree;  
Then I am dead to all the globe,  
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Vance Havner wrote that...

It was said of the great racehorse Man o' War: "Some horses led him at the first turn, some led him at the backstretch, a few led him at the far turn, but no horse ever led him in the homestretch." Some Christians run nobly at the start of the race, some do well halfway, but blessed is the man who makes a good finish. Paul's batting average was good to the end of the season: "I have finished my course" (2 Ti 4:7).

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In the Classic movie **Chariots of Fire**, [Eric Liddell](#), ([short video documentary](#)) who later became a missionary to China, first became famous as a runner declaring "All I know is that God has made me fast and I feel his pleasure when I run!" ([This quote is @ ~1:22' in this scene from Chariots of Fire](#)) Paul too was a man of conviction and could surely say a similar statement that about Jesus' calling him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

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**Unto Death** - The name of Harriet Newell ([Short bio](#) , [Longer bio](#)) has shone in the annals of modern missionary history. At the early age of eighteen she went with her husband as a missionary to India (1793-1812). It was much harder to go then as a pioneer than it is to go today. They arrived on the heathen coast only to remain a few weeks and then to be sent away. With heavy hearts they put to sea again. The young wife was stricken with fever and died. Thus in one year this Christian woman became missionary, wife, mother, and martyr. She seemed to accomplish nothing. She merely sailed away over the sea with a great love in her heart, to be exiled, to die, and to find a grave among strangers. She taught no heathen woman; she told the story of redemption to no benighted soul. But was that lovely young life wasted? By no means! During all the past century her name has been one of the strongest inspirations to missionary work. The story of her consecration has kindled in many other women's hearts the flames of love, sending them to carry the love of Christ to dark, sinful lands. She being dead yet speaketh. ([Ref](#))

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## DEAD MEN ON FURLOUGH

**Ray Stedman** - Karl Marx wrote that **communists are dead men on furlough**, i.e., they treat themselves as though they are as good as dead (cp Ro 6:2-4, Col 2:12). They have nothing to lose so they are ready for anything (Php 1:21). That characterizes even better what a Christian really is. He is really a dead man on furlough. He wants nothing for himself, but wants only to have God exalted, Christ manifested (2Cor 4:10,11,12, 2:14, 15, 16). We have it stated so clearly here in these words which are carved across the front of our auditorium: "**You are not your own; you are bought with a price**" (1Cor 6:19-20) Paul says, "I do not count my life of any value nor as precious to myself -- I am not my own, but I am bought with a price. And that purchase means that I am available to Another to work through me. My aim, my goal, my joy, my desire in life is not that I should have anything for myself, but for my Lord." What a wonderful statement of just how available he was as an instrument of God's working (cp Acts 9:15-16).

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**ONE THING** - Dr. Torrey M. Johnson, one of the founders of Youth for Christ, said to me, "Son, find that one thing you do that God blesses, and stick with it!" That was wise counsel, and I recommend it to you. Vladimir Lenin was the fanatical architect of the former USSR. A colleague once said of him, "Lenin thinks about nothing but revolution. He talks about nothing but revolution. He eats and drinks revolution. And if he dreams at night, he must dream about revolution." No matter how much we deplore Lenin's fanaticism and all the evil that came from it, we must recognize that his single-minded passion not only helped him accomplish his goals but affected the entire course of history. **What is our ruling passion? Is there some cause, some sport, some hobby, some project that fills us with enthusiasm, focuses our energies, and commands the untiring investment of our time and thought and money? In light of what God says has eternal significance, what value does our passion really possess?** The apostle Paul expressed a worthy goal when he wrote, "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). To know Jesus Christ, to trust Him, to love Him, and to serve Him--that is a passion with eternal value. --V C G

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**THE LEGEND OF THE PELICAN** - I was surprised to learn that in religious art the pelican has long been a symbol of self-sacrifice. Having observed these strange birds firsthand while fishing along the west coast of Florida, I felt that they were more like lazy freeloaders than self-denying saints. With pitiful stares that masked hearts full of envy, they would sit and lust after every fish I caught. Once in a while they would even try to intercept one before I could reel it in.

Their behavior, however, is not why they symbolize self-sacrifice. The association is made because of their red-tipped beak. According to legend, when a mother pelican cannot find food for her young, she thrusts her beak into her breast and nourishes her little ones with her own blood. The early church saw in this story a beautiful picture of what Christ did for us and what we in turn should do for one another. The apostle Paul reflected this self-giving attitude as he made his farewell speech to the Ephesian believers (Acts 20:24).

Because of our sinful nature, we are characterized more by greed than by self-sacrifice. But that can change. Through faith in Jesus, we are forgiven and our hearts are transformed. Then, as we depend on God's Spirit who lives within us, we will practice the art of self-sacrificing love.— by Mart De Haan

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a present far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.  
—Watts

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**A Homing Instinct** - One day a bird tapped at the window of Mrs. Nansen's home at Christiania. Instantly the window was opened, and the wife of the famous arctic explorer in another moment covered the little messenger with kisses and caresses. The carrier pigeon had been away from the cottage for thirty months, but it had not forgotten the way home. It brought a note from Mr. Nansen saying that all was going well with him and his expedition in the polar regions. The explorer had fastened the message to the carrier pigeon and turned the bird loose. The frail courier darted out into the blizzard air. It flew like an arrow over a thousand miles of frozen waste, then over another thousand of ocean and plains and forests, until one morning it entered the window of the waiting mistress and delivered the message which she had been awaiting so anxiously. The bird makes one think of Paul. We are filled with amazement at his faith, sagacity and endurance. How could a little carrier pigeon accomplish a feat so wonderful? After an absence of thirty months how could it keep on a course so true that it would reach its goal two thousand miles away? Paul after twenty years of toil and struggle had his face set as truly as ever towards the goal that he had set before him from the beginning, the world for Christ. ([Ref](#))

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**TOUGH OR EASY?** - The Christian life—is it tough or easy? Which is it supposed to be? Does our faith in Jesus Christ cause us difficulty, hardship, suffering, and loss? Or does it pave for us an easy road to heaven?

These aren't easy questions. But if we look at some of the people in the Bible—the ones we admire and respect for their obvious faithfulness to the Lord—we see that they didn't have a life of ease. Paul, for example, faced difficulties that would make most of us wonder where God is: shipwrecks, imprisonments, beatings, and other kinds of abuse (2 Corinthians 11:23-28). It seems he was better off before he started following Jesus.

In his book *Amusing Ourselves To Death*, social critic Neil Postman wrote, "Christianity is a serious and demanding religion. When it is delivered as easy and amusing, it is another kind of religion altogether." He's right. Jesus Himself said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). That's a clear call for self-denial.

Paul was given a task, and he did it wholeheartedly for God's glory, no matter what the cost (Acts 20:24). Are we willing to do what God has called us to do with the same dedication, whether it is easy or tough? —J D Brannon

I do not ask for easy paths  
Along life's winding roads,  
But for the promised grace and strength  
To carry all its loads.  
—Meadows

**Following Jesus is always right—  
but seldom easy.**

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**Life Compared to the Tour de France** - One of the most grueling of all bicycle races is the Tour De France. A contestant in that event, Gilbert Duclos-Lassalle, describes it in a National Geographic article titled, "An Annual Madness." The race covers about 2000 miles, including some of France's most difficult, mountainous terrain. Eating and drinking is done on the run. And there are extremes of heat and cold. To train for the event, Lassalle rides his bicycle 22,000 miles a year. What kind of prize makes people endure so much hardship and pain! \$10,000? \$100,000? No. It's just a special winner's jersey. What then motivates the contestants? Lassalle sums it up: "Why, to sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day. To be able to say you finished the Tour de France." What a tragedy to see this same motive lead to doping scandals in so many of the top tour riders (cf the Tour 2007 when the yellow jersey leader was actually removed from the race because of suspicious behavior. So beloved, don't bring about a scandal but instead finish well like Paul! Your reward is will far surpass -- in degree and in time -- the satisfaction and transient glory these top athletes receive for finishing a grueling bicycle race in Paris! No you won't sweep through the Arc de Triomphe on the last day, but you will stand at the **Bema Seat or Judgment Seat of Christ** and be appropriately recompensed for what you have done during your earthly race, whether it is good or "bad" [*bad* is **phaulos** which means useless or worthless and does not refer to sin which some falsely teach] (2Cor 5:10-note)

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[Edwards](#) offers these wise words of counsel to all disciples

"It is important to note that in both these metaphors THEY GET HARDER THE FARTHER ONE GOES. The farther one goes into the competition, the harder it is to keep competing wholeheartedly. So it seems to be for the disciple. Yet how much better it is to "burn out" than to "rust out." We must be wise enough to take time out for refreshing and renewal, but then continue to "work the works of Him Who sent us while it is day." Henry Martyn served in India for seven years before dying at the age of thirty-one. During this time, he translated the New Testament into three Indian dialects. Before he died, he wrote: ([2 Timothy- Call to Completion](#))

And when I am dying how glad I shall be,  
That the lamp of my life has been blazed out for Thee.  
I shall not care in whatever I gave,  
Of labor or money one sinner to save.

I shall not care that the way has been rough,  
That Thy dear feet led the way is enough.  
And when I am dying, how glad I shall be  
That the lamp of my life has been blazed out for Thee.

## **THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GRACE OF GOD**

**Gospel of the grace of God** - What a beautiful description of the **Gospel** which brings salvation, for this miracle comes about only by **the grace of God** (Eph 2:8, 9, Titus 2:11).

The writers of the New Testament adapted the term as God's message of salvation for lost sinners. **Euaggelion** is found in several combination phrases, each describing the gospel like a multifaceted jewel in various terms from a different viewpoint (from the NASB, 1977):

**Wiersbe** comments that...

The Gospel is called "the Gospel of God" (Mark 1:14) because it comes from God and brings us to God. It is "the Gospel of the kingdom" (Mark 4:23, Mt 9:35, Mt 24:14, Lk 16:16) because faith in the Saviour brings you

into His kingdom. It is the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1) because He is the heart of it; without His life, death, and resurrection, there would be no Good News. Paul called it "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) because there can be no salvation apart from grace (Eph. 2:8-9). There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:1-9), and it centers in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (1 Cor. 15:1-11). ([Wiersbe, W: Bible Exposition Commentary - New Testament. 1989. Victor or Logos or Wordsearch](#))

### **Related Resource: Our Multifaceted Gospel - It's Many Names**

**Gospel** (2098)(**euaggelion** from **eú** = good + **aggéllo** = proclaim, tell) is literally good news or glad tidings. In secular Greek it originally referred to a reward for good news and later became the good news itself. The word **euaggelion** was commonly used in the first century as our words "good news" today. In ancient secular Greek as alluded to above, **euaggelion** described **good news** of any kind and prior to the writing of the New Testament, had no definite religious connotation in the ancient world until it was taken over by the "Cult of Caesar" which was the state religion and in which the emperor was worshipped as a god.

**Alexander Maclaren** once said...

The Gospel is not merely a **message of deliverance**, it is also a rule of conduct (**Ed**: And I would add the supernatural power to carry out that "conduct"). It is not merely **theology**, it is also **ethics**. Like some of the ancient municipal charters, the grant of privileges and proclamation of freedom is also the sovereign code which imposes duties and shapes life.

**Euaggelion** was commonly used in the Greco-Roman culture as "a technical term for "news of victory." The messenger appears, raises his right hand in greeting and calls out with a loud voice: "rejoice ...we are victorious". By his appearance it is known already that he brings good news. His face shines, his spear is decked with laurel, his head is crowned, he swings a branch of palms, joy fills the city, euaggelia are offered, the temples are garlanded, an agon (race) is held, crowns are put on for the sacrifices and the one to whom the message is owed is honored with a wreath...[thus] euaggelion is closely linked with the thought of victory in battle." (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament) This is a convicting definition - here a pagan messenger radiantly announces good news of an earthly victory. How much more radiant should we be who are the bearers of the great news of Christ's eternal triumph over sin, Satan, and death!

In contrast to the counterfeit gospel, the human proclamation of the **Gospel** (euaggelion) does not merely herald a new era, but in fact actually brings it about because the euaggelion has within it the inherent power to germinate and generate salvation in those who hear it proclaimed. The **Gospel** is not a stagnant system of ethics but is the Word of Truth which is living, moving, growing, bearing fruit and spreading. The **Gospel** possesses a divine energy that causes it to spread like a mustard seed growing into a tree (Mt 13:31,32). The **Gospel** produces fruit both in the internal transformation of individuals, and also in the external growth of the church. The living **Gospel** is the power that transforms lives. As it does so, the witness of those transformed lives produces fruit, including new converts. So as the **Gospel** produces fruit in individual lives, its influence spreads. If this is true (and it is), then why are so many saints shy about speaking forth the good news of the greatest story ever told?! Christ commands believers to share this Good News with the rest of the world. This Good News is Christ's life-giving message to a dying world

Go into all the world and **preach** (aorist imperative = command to do this now! Don't delay!) the Gospel to all creation." (Mk 16:15)

**A. B. Simpson** is reported to have said that the **Gospel**...

Tells rebellious men that God is reconciled, that justice is satisfied, that sin has been atoned for, that the judgment of the guilty may be revoked, the condemnation of the sinner canceled, the curse of the Law blotted out, the gates of hell closed, the portals of heaven opened wide, the power of sin subdued, the guilty conscience healed, the broken heart comforted, the sorrow and misery of the Fall undone.

**Grace** (5485)(**charis**) is derived from **chairo** = to rejoice. English = charity. Beggars need "charity" even as sinners need *grace*, for we are all spiritual paupers outside of Christ, but "*God gives where he finds empty hands*"-Augustine (cp Mt 5:3-note). **Grace** is a word which defies a simple definition but at its core conveys the sense of favor while the specific nuances of **charis** depend on the **context** in which it is used. Someone has written that the word **grace** is probably the greatest word in the Scriptures, even greater even than "love," because **grace** is love in action, and therefore includes it. It is hardly too much to say that God has in no word uttered Himself and all that was in His heart more distinctly than in this word grace (charis)!

**Grace** in simple terms is God's unmerited favor and supernatural enablement and empowerment for salvation and for daily sanctification. You may want to read that again - In other words the Gospel of grace is that by which we are saved (justified) initially and thereafter are "saved" daily (progressive sanctification). Grace is everything for nothing to those who don't deserve anything. Grace is what every man needs, what none can earn and what God Alone can and does freely give (see Ro 8:32-note where "freely give" is **charizomai [word study]** from **charis** = a grace gift!). **Grace** addresses man's sin, while **mercy** addresses man's misery.

The **gift of grace** makes men fit for salvation, miraculously making **separated strangers** into God's **beloved sons** (1Th 1:4-note, 1Jn 3:1-note, 1Jn 3:2-note, 1Jn 3:3-note).

**Spurgeon** in his sermon on this passage declared...

I shall try to proclaim that word, "**GRACE**," so that those who know its joyful sound shall be glad, and those who despise it shall be cut to the heart! **Grace** is the essence of the **Gospel**! **Grace** is the one hope for this fallen world! **Grace** is the sole comfort of saints looking forward to Heaven!...Let me try to explain in a brief manner how the **Gospel** is the good news of **Grace**. The **Gospel** is an announcement that God is prepared to deal with guilty man on the ground of free favor and pure mercy. There would be no good news in saying that God is just, for, in the first place, that is not even news—we know that God is just. The natural conscience teaches man that. That God will punish sin and reward righteousness is not news at all and, if it were news, yet it would not be good news, for we have all sinned—and upon the ground of justice we must perish. But it is news and news of the best kind, that the Judge of all is prepared to pardon transgression and to justify the ungodly! It is good news to the sinful that the Lord will blot out sin, cover the sinner with righteousness and receive him into His favor—and that not on account of anything he has done, or will do—but out of Sovereign Grace!

Though we are all guilty without exception and all most justly condemned for our sins, yet God is ready to take us from under the curse of His Law and give us all the blessedness of righteous men as an act of pure mercy! Remember how David saw this and spoke of it in the 32nd Psalm—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." This is a message worth dying for, that through the Covenant of Grace, God can be just and yet the Justifier of him that believes in Jesus! That He can be the righteous Judge of men and yet believing men can be freely justified by His Grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! That God is merciful and gracious—and is ready to bless the most unworthy—is a wonderful piece of news, worth a man's spending a hundred lives to tell! My heart leaps within me as I repeat it in this Hall and tell the penitent, the desponding and the despairing that, **though their sins deserve Hell, yet Grace can give them Heaven and make them fit for it**—and that as a sovereign act of love—altogether independent of their character or what they deserve! Because the Lord has said, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," there is hope for the most hopeless! Since "it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy," (Rom. 9:16), there is an open door of hope for those who otherwise might despair!...

The **Gospel** message is of **Grace** because it is directed to those whose only claim is their need. ([A Gospel Worth Dying For](#))

**John Piper** comments...

notice the immense reality of God's grace. The verse ends, "to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." The power of God's holiness and justice are like a great, violent hurricane, and the grace of God is like the eye of the hurricane where all is peace and calm. Grace is the center of God's reality. Grace, or love, is the essential calm at the center of the vortex of his infinite perfections. Paul had felt himself swept into the terror of that hurricane one day on the Damascus road. And then to his utter amazement he was drawn through it into the peace and beauty of the eye of grace even though he was the "chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:12–16). ([A Cause to Live For - Desiring God](#))

**Piper** goes on to summarize Acts 20:24 observing that there are two Effects of This Cause Worth Living For

(1) It Made Paul Indifferent to Earthly Gain - First, it made him utterly indifferent to earthly gain. The verse begins, "I do not count my life of any value nor as precious to myself." In other words he had found a cause to live for that was so profoundly satisfying that it was more valuable than life itself. And of course life is the basis of all sex, all drugs, all prestige, all coolness, all wealth. And so, if the lure of the cause surpasses the lure of life itself, then it surpasses all the things that this life sustains. Or to put it another way, Paul's Creator had given him a cause to live for that freed him for a kind of reckless abandon toward danger. Life for Paul was not dull. It had all the "edge" and "thrill" and "daring" and "differentness" that any 18 year old girl in Minneapolis could ever dream of bearing.

2. It Gave Paul an Incredible Discipline - The second effect that Paul's cause to live for had on him was to give him an incredible discipline to stay on the assigned trail. The verse says that he valued one thing more than life: "if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus." He pictures

himself as an athlete running a race. His coach, trainer, audience, and award is Jesus Christ. One thing matters: finishing the course the way he has been taught. ([A Cause to Live For - Desiring God](#))

**Steven Cole** tells the story of a man who finished his course, **John G. Paton** (see also [Biography Resources](#))...

John G. Paton was born in Scotland in 1824. He was reared in a godly home and came to personal faith in Christ. As a young man, he worked in an inner city mission in Scotland. But the Lord put it upon his heart to go as a missionary to the fierce cannibals of the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific. In 1839, the first missionaries to these islands had been clubbed to death, cooked, and eaten within a few minutes of landing. About ten years later, some other missionaries had landed on another of the islands where the natives showed an interest in their teachings, and the Lord gave them about 3,500 converts in a short period of time. They needed help in the work. So in 1857, just 18 years after the first martyrs had shed their blood on the beach of the New Hebrides, Paton strongly sensed God's call on his life to offer himself for missionary service there. He immediately met with strong opposition from many that knew him. They argued that he was leaving a certain ministry that God had obviously blessed for an uncertain future where he might throw his life away among the cannibals. His converts needed him and besides, there were plenty of heathen at home to reach. Why go half way around the world to reach these savages? He was even offered a free house and was told to name his salary, on condition that he would stay at home! But these temptations only served to confirm his calling to go to the South Seas. Among the many who sought to deter him was one old Christian gentleman, whose crowning argument was always, "The Cannibals! You will be eaten by Cannibals!" Finally, Paton replied, "Mr. Dickson, you are advanced in years now, and your own prospect is soon to be laid in the grave, there to be eaten by worms. I confess to you, that if I can but live and die serving and honoring the Lord Jesus, it will make no difference to me whether I am eaten by Cannibals or by worms; and in the Great Day my resurrection body will arise as fair as yours in the likeness of our risen Redeemer" (John G. Paton Autobiography [Banner of Truth], p. 56).

Paton lost his wife and infant son within a few months of their arrival. He lived in almost daily danger of his life. But God spared him and he lived to age 83, spending his final years traveling around the world publicizing and raising support for the mission. Late in life he said, "Oh that I had my life to begin again! I would consecrate it anew to Jesus in seeking the conversion of the remaining Cannibals on the New Hebrides" (p. 496). John Paton finished his course because he put the ministry that he received from the Lord Jesus above even life itself. I hope that I have convinced you that you need to do the same thing. ([Sermon](#))

**Brian Bells** summarizes Acts 20:24-26...

Paul saw himself as an **accountant** (I count); a **runner** (I may finish my race); a **steward** (the ministry which I received); a **witness** (to testify); a **herald** (preaching the kingdom); a **watchman** (innocent of blood). (Quoted from Warren Wiersbe "With the Word") What a responsibility it is to be a servant of God! Christian teachers must deliver the whole counsel of God. The positive, the negative, the soothing & the corrective. Paul, by lip and life proclaimed the whole counsel of God. ([Sermon Notes](#))

Acts 20:25 "And now, **behold**, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face: **Kai nun idou** (2SAMM) **ego oida** (1SRAI) **oti ouketi opsesthe** (2PFMI) **to prosopon mou umeis pantes en ois dielthon** (1SAAI) **kerusson** (PAPMSN) **ten basileian**:

- **know**: Ac 20:38 Ro 15:23
- **preaching the Kingdom [and the King!]**: Ac 8:12, 28:31, Mt 4:17,23, Mt 10:7, Mt 13:19,52 Luke 9:60, 16:16
- **See**: Ga 1:22 Col 2:1)

## PAUL'S WORDS OF FAREWELL

**Behold (idou)** - With a second "and now behold" (Acts 20:22) Paul adds an interjection to arrest the attention of the elders (and us) so that they will "Stop! Listen! Pay careful attention!" He is announcing that they will never again each other again in this earthly life. This would serve to reiterate the importance of what he has just said and also what he is getting ready to say.

**Preaching the kingdom** (cp Acts 28:31) - The kingdom of God is where the King reigns and the King of course is Jesus. **Is He your King?** In the context of this passage, this phrase is another way to say he had **preached the Gospel of the kingdom** (Acts 8:12),



the **Gospel of the grace of God** (Acts 20:24). Compare Luke's similar wording in Acts 8:12...

But when they believed Philip **preaching** the good news about **the kingdom** of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

**Comment:** See also Mt 4:23 "proclaiming **the Gospel of the kingdom**", Lk 16:16 "the **Gospel of the kingdom** of God is preached"

**Preaching** (2784)(kerusso or kerysso from kerux/keryx = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes; kerugma = the thing preached or the message) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. **Kerusso** was used of the official whose duty it was to proclaim loudly and extensively the coming of an earthly king, even as **our gospel** is to clearly announce the coming of the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16-note)!

The Imperial Herald would enter a town in behalf of the Emperor, and make a public proclamation of the message which his Sovereign ordered him to give, doing so with such formality, gravity, and authority as to emphasize that the message must be heeded! (Think about this in regard to the Gospel of God instead of the decree of a man! cf 1Th 2:13-note). He gave the people exactly what the Emperor bade him give, nothing more, nothing less. He did not dare add to the message or take away from it. **Should this not be the example and pattern every preacher and teacher of the holy gospel of God seeks and strives to emulate, yea, even doing so with fear and trembling!** ("not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts" see 1Th 2:4-note)

**Kingdom** (932)(basileia from basileus = a king) denotes sovereignty, royal power, dominion. **Basileia** can also refer to the territory or people over whom a king rules. The fundamental principle of the Kingdom is declared in the words of the Lord spoken in the midst of a company of Pharisees, "the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you," (Luke 17:21) In other words, where the King (Jesus) is, there is the Kingdom. So in preaching the "kingdom", Paul preached Jesus. It has been said that the only **kingdom** that will prevail in this world is the **kingdom** that is not of this world! Amen!

## KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

**Preaching** (the Gospel of) **the Kingdom** (of God) reflects the basic truth that there are two kingdoms on earth - the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. Paul reviewed with the saints at Colossae what God did when he saved us writing...

Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in**light**. (the Kingdom of light) For He delivered us from the **domain** (exousia = right and might ~ Satan is ruler of the kingdom) **of darkness** (the Kingdom of Satan) and transferred us to the **kingdom of His beloved Son**, in Whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (Col 1:12, 13-note, Col 1:14-note)

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you **out of darkness** (Kingdom of Satan) into **His marvelous light**; (Kingdom of God) (1Peter 2:9)

(Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles) to open their eyes ("eyes of their heart", their spiritual vision - 2Cor 4:4, 2Cor 4:6) so that they may turn from (~ repentance) **darkness** ("Kingdom of darkness") to **light** ("Kingdom of light") and from the dominion of Satan (Kingdom of Satan) to God (Kingdom of God), in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:18)

**John MacArthur** alludes to two **kingdoms in conflict** commenting...

**Preaching the kingdom** meant proclaiming the Gospel, the good news that sinners in the realm of Satan, death, and destruction ("**the kingdom of darkness**") could enter the realm (**Ed**: "realm" = synonym for "kingdom") of salvation, life, and glory ("**the kingdom of God's Son**"). Paul preached this Gospel thoroughly and clearly, as he indicated in Acts 20:20 and Acts 20:27. ([MacArthur, J: Acts 1-12; Acts 13-28 Moody Press or Logos or Wordsearch or Wordsearch](#)) (Bolding added)

**You...will no longer see my face** - Now ask yourself, what effect might this statement have on the following words? These are the last words they will ever hear from the great apostle. Surely this adds considerable weight and solemnity to the words that followed. As Phillips says "His attentive listeners redoubled their attention."

**Acts 20:26** "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men:[dioti marturomai](#) (1SPMI) [humin en](#)

- **I testify:** Job 16:19 Jn 12:17, 19:35 Ro 10:2 2Co 1:23, 8:3 1Th 2:10-12
- **that I am innocent:** Ac 18:6 2Sa 3:28 Ezek 3:18-21, Ezek 33:2-9 2Co 7:2 1Ti 5:22 )

**Therefore (term of conclusion)** - Why? What is Paul concluding? He has just told them this is their last face to face meeting but that he has told them everything they needed to know about the "whole purpose of God." There is nothing else he could say.

**Eadie** adds "since the supervision henceforth devolves solely on you, and since such is the example of vigilance, anxiety, and love I have set before you, "take heed."

**I testify** = KJV)([3143](#))(**marturomai** from **martus/martys** = witness) in its original sense meant summon to witness and thus conveys the idea of testifying in affirmation or exhortation. The idea of **marturomai** is to bear witness by making an emphatic affirmation or a serious declaration. In short, Paul uses this particular verb to emphasize the truth of his following claim (cp similar uses of **marturomai** = Gal 5:3, Eph 4:17).

**Innocent** (guiltless, "my conscience is clear" = NJB) ([2513](#))(**katharos**) literally describes that which is free of dirt and thus **clean**. It describes that which is free from admixture or adulteration and thus is **pure**. The use of **katharos** in the New Testament focuses mainly on an inward cleanness (heart, conscience), rather than on an external or ceremonial cleanness (as emphasized in the Old Testament). **Katharos** is used to modify **conscience** (clean, clear - 1Ti 3:9).

#### **MacArthur...**

He had not only taught the church but also evangelized the lost. He had not been unfaithful in any aspect of ministry. (Ibid)

#### **The NET Bible** comments that...

Paul had a clear conscience, since he had faithfully carried out his responsibility of announcing to (the Ephesians) the whole purpose of God. (**I am innocent of the blood of you all**) That is, "that if any of you should be lost, I am not responsible" (an idiom).

**Blood of all men** - Several commentaries feel Paul is alluding to Ezekiel's description of the faithful watchman who warns the wicked...

"Son of man (addressed to Ezekiel), I have appointed you **watchman** to the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, warn them from Me. 18 "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die'; and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but **his blood I will require at your hand**. 19 "Yet if you have warned the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. 20 "Again, when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and I place an obstacle before him, he shall die; since you have not warned him, he shall die in his sin, and his righteous deeds which he has done shall not be remembered; but **his blood I will require at your hand**. 21 "However, if you have warned the righteous man that the righteous should not sin, and he does not sin, he shall surely live because he took warning; and you have delivered yourself." (Ezekiel 3:18-21, cp Ezek 33:2-9)

**Comment:** God's word to Ezekiel should serve as a sobering reminder of the responsibility all believers have to speak forth the Gospel of the grace of God as His Spirit gives us opportunity and utterance.

#### **John Phillips** adds that...

As far as Ephesus was concerned, he had fully evangelized and warned the city. If people remained in their sins it was no fault of his. His hands were clean, no blood guiltiness rested on his conscience. He called upon his friends, the Ephesian elders, to corroborate this remarkable claim. (The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Acts: An Expository Commentary)

#### **Pastor Steven Cole** observes that...

Not everyone is called to be a preacher or missionary, as Paul was. But with whatever gifts God has entrusted to us, the bottom line is the same: we must be faithful by our lives and words to the gospel of the grace of God. If our lives and words betray the gospel of God's grace, we are in some sense guilty of the blood of those who were tainted by our failure (Acts 20:26). If our lives and our words bear witness to the gospel of God's grace, we are innocent of the blood of those who came in contact with our witness. ([Sermon- Recommended](#))

Acts 20:27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God: [ou gar hupesteilamen \(1SAM\)](#) [tou me anageilai \(AAN\)](#) [pasan ten boulen tou theou humin.](#):"

- **I did not shrink:** Acts 20:20,35, 26:22,23, 2Co 4:2 Ga 1:7-10, 4:16 1Th 2:4
- **The whole purpose of God:** Acts 2:23 Ps 32:11 Isa 46:10,11 Jer 23:22 Mt 28:20 Luke 7:30, Jn 15:15 1Co 11:23 Eph 1:11

## PAUL'S RESPONSIBILITY FULFILLED

**For (gar)** is a **term of explanation**. Stop and ask what Paul is explaining. He has just said he was '**innocent of the blood of all men.**' How so? He goes on to explain that he had declared the '**whole purpose of God**' which is another way of saying that he had preached the Gospel at Ephesus, fulfilling his responsibility as a watchman. If he had not told them of the Gospel by which a man is saved or if he had adulterated God's clear revelation (e.g., Gal 1:8, 9), he would not have been **innocent**, because he would not have warned them but would have held back (cp meaning of "shrink") the truth that God had revealed to him to give to others (See Jesus' instructions to Ananias regarding the newly born again Paul's responsibility - Acts 9:15, 16, see especially Jesus' direct instructions to Saul/Paul in Acts 22:21 and Acts 26:14, 15, 16, 17, 18).

**I did not shrink** - **David Guzik** comments on Paul's preaching noting first that...

Paul thought of himself as a watchman, there to bring forth the whole counsel of God's word. This doesn't guarantee the people will be saved, but it will guarantee Paul is without guilt before God. He has done his job! Where are those who today declare the whole counsel of God? Paul warned that in the last days, **people would not endure sound doctrine**, but look for teachers who would tell them what they want to hear - teachers who will scratch their itching ears (2Ti. 4:3-note).

**Many preachers today simply use a Bible text as a launching pad, and then go on to say what they want - what the people want to hear.** Others throw in Bible quotations to illustrate their points, or to illustrate their stories! But who will simply let the Bible speak for itself and let it declare its own power? Taking Paul's testimony at full strength, we must say that those preachers who deliberately fail to declare . . . the whole counsel of God are guilty of the blood of all men!

**The preacher who preaches what his audience wants to hear, and not the whole counsel of God, hurts both his audience and himself!**

We also must demand that we are being taught the whole counsel of God; not just interesting topics, not just what we want to hear, not just the things that will "grab" people, but what God says to all of our lives. (Bolding and color added for effect)

**Shrink** (shunned = KJV, hesitated = NIV, keep back = YLT) ([5288](#)) (**hupostello** from **hupo** = under + **stéllō** = send or draw) means literally to draw under (out of sight) = draw oneself under = cower or shrink back. **Hupostello** was used for drawing back or down sails on a ship and so slackening the course, and metaphorically meant to be hesitant in doing something, shrinking back, avoiding, being unwilling to utter the truth of the Gospel because of fear or reprisals or reproach (Acts 20:27).

**Spurgeon** on shrink from declaring the whole purpose of God ....

That man does not preach the whole counsel of God who does not let **God's Word speak for itself** in its own pure, simple language... He will not shirk the truth. He will dare to look at it straight in the face himself and then he will bring it up into the pulpit, and there say to it, 'O Word, speak for thyself, and be thou heard alone. Suffer me not, O Lord, to pervert or misinterpret thine own heaven-sent truth.' (Amen!)

**Declaring** (proclaiming = NAB, announcing = NET) ([312](#))(**anaggello/anangelo** from **aná** = up to, again, back {like our English prefix "**re**"= again thus "**re**-port" or "**re**-hearse" = to say again} + **aggéllō** = tell, declare related to **áγγελος** = messenger) means to bring back word and later to announce, to report. To rehearse, to show, to declare or tell of things done. **Anaggello** means to carry back good tidings, to inform, to provide information, with some contexts conveying the implication of considerable detail (see Acts 14:27, 15:4). In the 14 NT uses of **anaggello**, notice that most report or announce something that has to do with God, including His works and/or purposes.

**Alfred Plummer** comments that **apaggello** "has merely the notion of proclaiming and making known, (**anaggello**) has the notion of proclaiming again what has been received elsewhere." ([Ibid](#)) As a practical application of this truth is that believers today should emulate Paul in (1) carefully and accurately handling the Word of Truth (cp 2Ti 2:15-note) and (2) in announcing or proclaiming that message of Good News to others, taking care not to alter the message. Remember that the first two letters in "Gospel" spell "**Go**"

which is what the early church did for they could not stop speaking what they had seen and heard. (Acts 4:20, cp Acts 5:42 and Jn 4:29, the Samaritan woman at the well) The Gospel is not something just to *come* and *hear*; it is something to *go* and *tell*! Paul was faithful to carry out his responsibility to proclaim the Gospel, not backing down in spite of persecution, and thus he was innocent. He was not responsible for whether a person accepted or rejected the Gospel. If they accepted, the blood of Christ would cover and take away their sins. If they rejected, their own blood would be required.

**Whole purpose** - "All the counsel" (KJV), "Whole plan" (HCSB), "whole counsel" (ESV), "entire plan" (NAB), "whole will" (NIV) So what was **the whole purpose of God**? In context this phrase would certainly include the **Gospel of the grace of God**, good news which Paul presented to all men, excluding none, lest he be held guilty of the blood of those to whom he might have refused to preach.

**David Peterson** comments that

The breadth and depth of Paul's teaching about the **whole will of God** can be discerned from an examination of his letter to the Romans, which he had just written and sent ahead of him at this time. (The Acts of the Apostles - Pillar NT Commentary)

**Purpose** (plan) ([1012](#))(**boule**) expresses a decision, a purpose or a plan which in regard to men is the result of inner deliberation. When used of God **boule** indicates His fixed intention. The idea is that God's purpose stands fixed and cannot be altered. Seven of the twelve NT uses of **boule** refer to God's will and God's purpose (Lk 7:30; Acts 2:23; 4:28; 13:36; 20:27; Ep 1:11; He 6:17). As noted when **boule** is used of men it has a weaker force, expressing an intention or plan that, unlike the situation with God, may or may not be achieved.

**J Vernon McGee** was surely an imitator of Paul declaring...

As I write this, I am a retired preacher. I have made many blunders and have failed in many ways. But as I look back on my ministry, I can say truthfully that when I stood in the pulpit, I declared the Word of God as I saw it. I have the deep satisfaction of knowing that if I went back to any pulpit which I have held, I haven't a thing to add to what I have already said. I don't mean I couldn't say it in a better way, but the important thing is that I declared the whole counsel of God. I have always believed that the important issue is to get out the entire Word of God.

**Rob Salvato** divides Paul's sermon into three sections...

Acts 20:18-21 - Paul reminds these leaders about his faithfulness to the Lord and to the church as he ministered for three years in Ephesus

Acts 20:22-27 - Paul tells these leaders his present approach in light of the past and future

Acts 20:28-35 - Paul warns these leaders of the dangers that they and the church would face. ([Sermon](#))