

# PAUL'S LEGACY (1)

ACTS 20



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*A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe*

Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20  
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## Introduction to Acts 20

Paul takes his journey toward Jerusalem. He wants to be there by Pentecost, probably for two reasons: To celebrate with the brethren and to reach many visitors for the Lord. He continues his ministry along the way, but a troubling tone begins to set in, as Paul senses something dire in the offing.

Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus give us a good glimpse into what must have been his practice in many of the places where he started churches or returned to train and appoint elders, and to strengthen the disciples.

Don't miss the fact, as we follow Paul's journey, that Christians seem to be just about everywhere. The ongoing work of Christ, launched and established, continues to be dispersed and replicated throughout the Roman world. Paul's legacy – and that of Peter and the other apostles – is beginning to grow.

We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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## 1 Disciples All Around

*Pray Psalm 46.1-3.*

God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;  
*Though its waters roar and be troubled,*  
*Though the mountains shake with its swelling.*  
*Selah*

*Sing Psalm 46.1-3.*

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.  
Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea consume the mountain range.  
Waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

*Read and meditate on Acts 20.1-6.*

*Preparation*

1. Who accompanied Paul?
2. Where were these men from?

*Meditation*

Paul headed off to Macedonia and Greece (vv. 1, 2). His old enemies had not forgotten him, however, and seemed resolute in their determination to be done with him once and for all (v. 3), but he escaped the Jews' plot. As he began his return to Antioch, we see joining him men whose names we will hear again in various of his epistles. Despite danger and uncertainty, Paul worked to strengthen churches, recruiting and developing leaders to ensure the continuity of the ongoing work of Christ after he and his generation were gone. In addition to Luke, seven men from three different regions were now on Paul's team. A company of disciples awaited them in Troas; and church leaders would gather to him from Ephesus.

This is Paul's legacy, precisely as he planned (2 Tim. 2.2). Following the example and command of Jesus, Paul didn't just preach and teach and counsel and whatever. He made disciples. And those disciples made disciples. And all those disciples gave up everything – including, in many instances, their lives – for the sake of the Gospel. By the time Paul began to wrap up his final missionary journey, scores of churches had been launched and thousands of believers were established in cities all over Asia Minor and Greece. And strong leaders were in place to continue the ongoing work of Christ.

Again, just as Paul had planned.

Disciples don't just happen. You can't wish them into existence. Disciples don't respond to fun and games, subtle cajoling, or handsome facilities and interesting programs. Disciples respond to vision, the promise of many trials and tribulations, feeding from sound doctrine and the whole counsel of God in His Word, clear callings and meaningful work, and the example of other disciples who understand the primacy of the Kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ in everything. Such disciples are what the Church needs today.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Let's look at Paul's legacy life plan.

His disciple Timothy received the plan in writing. We also are blessed, teachable, and accountable recipients of the same:

“You therefore, my son/daughter (fill your name in here):

1. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.
2. The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful people (in your Personal Mission Field) who will be able to teach others also.
3. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.
4. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.
5. If anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.
6. The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops.
7. Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.
8. Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel.
9. For saying this, I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.
10. Therefore, I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (2 Tim. 2.1-10)

“Disciples don’t just happen.” But “Such disciples are what the Church needs today.”

*For reflection*

1. What did Paul, echoing Jesus, mean by “discipleship”?
2. Can we be disciples without following Jesus, like Paul did (Mk. 10.42-45; 1 Cor. 11.1)? Explain.
3. What are some areas of your own discipleship that need strengthening?

*It is not for nothing that Luke mentions such devoted companionship for Paul. First, he tacitly commends the clemency of God, because although Paul had many false friends and true enemies, still God endowed him with many sincere friends and brothers, from whose intimacy he found some consolation in his adverse situations. Second, he indicates with how much concern the churches of Christ attended to Paul. For these companions seem to have accompanied Paul under the name and support of their own church. Johannes Brenz (1499-1570), Homily 94 on Acts 20.7*

*Pray Psalm 46.4-11.*

Rejoice in the sovereign power and rule of King Jesus. Lay your burdens at His feet. Intercede for those whose lives are ravaged by war, oppression, famine, or plague; and give thanks that Jesus does all things well and works all things together for good to those who love Him.

*Sing Psalm 46.4-11.*

(St. Chrysostom: *We Have not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God’s everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat’ning the earth with sore distress.

Nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.

God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God’s Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth, shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside.

Them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

## 2 Words and Deeds

*Pray Psalm 47.1-4.*

Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples!  
Shout to God with the voice of triumph!  
For the LORD Most High *is* awesome;  
*He is* a great King over all the earth.  
He will subdue the peoples under us,  
And the nations under our feet.  
He will choose our inheritance for us,  
The excellence of Jacob whom He loves.  
*Selah*

*Sing Psalm 47.1-4.*

*(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns)*

O clap your hands, you peoples all, with joy to God your songs intone!  
Shout out to Him, and on Him call, He is the mighty, sovereign One!

High is the Lord, O, fear His Name! He rules, a King o'er all the earth.  
Nations and peoples He has tamed, the heritage of His holy worth.

*Read Acts 20.1-16; meditate on verses 7-16.*

*Preparation*

1. What happened to Eutychus?
2. Why did Paul not want to stop at Ephesus?

*Meditation*

As the disciples in Troas gathered on the first day of the week for worship in Troas – here referred to as breaking bread (v. 7) – Paul met with them and taught them. He had a lot to say and spoke a long time, but people understood his words were important, so we don't find any of them tapping their watches or looking around. Paul obviously believed in the strengthening power of sound teaching.

Eutychus made the mistake, in a room filling with warm and somewhat noxious air, of sitting on a window ledge (vv. 8, 9). When he fell, Paul rushed to aid him, interrupting his teaching to care for this young man, and thus reminding the people of Troas that the Gospel is a ministry of words and deeds. We must always be ready to care for those in our midst whose needs come to our attention (vv. 10-12).

Paul departed Troas, heading for Jerusalem and ultimately, so he supposed, Antioch. Paul walked the brief distance from Troas to Assos, there to board the ship the others had taken (v. 13). Either he needed some time to think, was trying to avoid enemies, or wanted to encourage any believers he might have encountered along the way. He stayed away from Ephesus because returning there might delay him (vv. 13-16) – and perhaps rekindle old hostilities? – but he would minister to the elders of the churches, having been away from them now for more than three months (v. 3).

Paul was a ready witness to the Gospel – ready to teach or ready to serve as the situation required. True disciples are people of words (Eph. 4.14) and deeds (Tit. 3.1, 8, 14), and all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10.31).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Eutychus. His name means fortunate. Was he fortunate that he slept through Paul's preaching? Or was it because he didn't die from his treacherous fall? Was he fortunate because he was a believer? He was certainly fortunate to be remembered throughout history for his ill-fated nap. Here we are still reading about him two thousand years after the tumble (Acts 20.7-12). He was assuredly more fortunate than the fictitious Humpty Dumpty who could not be put back together again.

Bible stories are so rich and full of humanity; with their focus on our foibles and strengths. We are all invited to put ourselves in the place of each of these characters and imagine what we would do, or how we would respond. Nobody was perfect. But the believers were certainly dedicated and sincere.

Paul, on this occasion, didn't panic over Eutychus' fall, but dealt with him in the power of the Holy Spirit. He was full of confidence and control over the circumstances. He was trusting the Lord completely.

I am so thankful for all of our brothers and sisters in Scripture, who give us something to think about; something to avoid, perhaps, and something to emulate:

“By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain...” (Heb. 11.4).

“By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death...he pleased God” (Heb. 11.5).

“By faith Noah...moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household...” (Heb. 11.7).

“By faith Abraham obeyed...and he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11.8, 10).

“By faith Sarah...judged Him faithful who had promised” (Heb. 11.11).

“By faith Isaac...Jacob...Joseph...Moses...Joshua...Rahab...Gideon...Barak...Samson...Jonathan...David...Samuel” (Heb. 11.20-32).

“Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment” (Heb. 11.36).

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him...” (Heb. 12.1-3).

And Eutychus. And Paul. And all the others who have gone before us, fallibly, but faithfully following Jesus. And may our words and deeds be found as good and as pleasing to the Lord.

*For reflection*

1. Who is a Bible character whose example encourages and challenges you? Why?
2. Should we strive to be an example of faithfulness to the people in our Personal Mission Field? What would that entail?
3. Would you describe yourself as a “ready witness” like Paul? Explain.

*Paul hastened to Jerusalem, but tried to do good by the way, when going from place to place, as every good man should do. In doing God's work, our own wills and those of our friends must often be crossed; we must not spend time with them when duty calls us another way. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 20.13-16*

*Pray Psalm 47.5-9.*

Meditate on Jesus, exalted in glory and ruling over His Kingdom throughout the earth. Praise Him for giving you new life from the dead, and ask Him to cause His Kingdom to advance in and through you today.

*Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20*

*Sing Psalm 47.5-9.*

*(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns)*

God has ascended with a shout, the Lord with sound of trumpet bold!  
Sing praise to Him, let praise ring out! Let praise through all the world be told!

God is the King of all the earth, sing praise to Him with glorious psalms!  
He rules the nations by His worth, and on His throne receives their alms.

Princes of peoples gather all to Abraham and to our God.  
Exalt the Lord, and on Him call – the earth is His, so praise our God!



### 3 Remember

*Pray Psalm 55.1-3.*

Give ear to my prayer, O God,  
And do not hide Yourself from my supplication.  
Attend to me, and hear me;  
I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily,  
Because of the voice of the enemy,  
Because of the oppression of the wicked;  
For they bring down trouble upon me,  
And in wrath they hate me.

*Sing Psalm 55.1-3.*

(Bread of Life: [Break Thou the Bread of Life](#))

Hear now my prayer, O Lord, hide not from me. Answer me by Your Word and set me free!  
Wicked men sore oppress; restless am I. Lord, ease my soul's distress and hear my cry!

*Read Acts 20.1-24; meditate on verses 17-24.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Paul call the elders of Ephesus to recall?
2. What mattered most to Paul?

*Meditation*

Paul set forth his own example as a reminder and template for the elders from Ephesus – humility, diligence, faithfulness in work, both in public and in private, striving to build up the church and each member in the faith of Christ (vv. 18-21). His preaching and teaching – daily, publicly, and house to house – were reinforced by the example of his dedication, perseverance, and pastoral care.

From his experience in Ephesus and Greece, Paul was convinced that persecutions against him would increase in the days to come (vv. 22, 23); yet his only concern was to remain faithful and complete his ministry for the glory of God and the Gospel (v. 24). That was where Paul would know joy (v. 24), in giving himself to others, whatever the cost.

Paul insisted his life as such didn't matter (v. 24). What mattered to him was the Gospel, that those who were called to it should persist faithfully in it, following the example and instruction of the apostles and the Lord, and always working to make disciples, build the Church, and further the ongoing Kingdom work of Christ.

Both Paul's teaching and his personal example were critical to the work of ministry. We know from his epistles that prayer also was a major tool in Paul's ministry kit. Pastors and elders do well to follow him in their own ministries, with humility, tears, diligence, boldness, laboring in prayer and the Word for Christ and His Kingdom above all.

This is how we can encourage the people to whom God sends us.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Paul was warned by the Holy Spirit, in every city he traveled through, that trouble awaited him in Jerusalem. He didn't know what kind of trouble would happen, but it sounded like "chains and tribulations" awaited him there (Acts 20.22, 23).

And his response? "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may

finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20.24).

He was saying with the psalmist, "I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart" (Ps. 119.32). And Isaiah, "But those who wait upon the LORD, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Is. 40.31). And the writer of the book of Hebrews, "...let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us..." (Heb. 12.1). And he affirmed his own words written later to Timothy, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4.7).

But most importantly, we sense from Paul's attitude, he was living to the fullest the dictate of the Lord Jesus Who said: "And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do'" (Lk. 17.7-10).

Ann Patchett in her book, *These Precious Days*, recounts a conversation with Father Charles Strobel about this passage of Scripture: "He told me a story for Luke 17, in which the servant who does everything that is asked of him and then, joyfully, does more, is called "a worthless servant" (or "unprofitable servant," or "a servant who deserves no credit," depending on the translation). It is a state of loving service so deep, so all-encompassing, that the servant loses himself, so that the worthlessness becomes a kind of transcendence."

That was Paul. Warnings about his life or about potential suffering were not his focus. His only concern, and sole purpose in life, was his loving, all-encompassing service to Jesus Christ and those he was called to serve.

A "worthless servant" we would do well to imitate (1 Cor. 11.1).

*For reflection*

1. Which aspects of Paul's example do you try the hardest to imitate?
2. People are looking to the example of your life. What do you want them to see?
3. In which area of your life do you need to improve the example you set for others?

*This is success for a teacher, to educate his disciples by his own accomplishments.* John Chrysostom (344-407), *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 44

*Pray Psalm 55.16-23.*

Call on the Lord to grant you more of His great salvation, to fill you with His peace, prepare you for today's trials and struggles, bear your burdens, and keep you firm in the faith as a witness for Jesus Christ.

*Sing Psalm 55.16-223.*

(Bread of Life: [Break Thou the Bread of Life](#))

Lord, I will call on You, answer and save! Morning and evening too, my voice I raise.

Grant me Your peace, O Lord; answer my foes! All who reject God's Word He overthrows.

Many assail, O Lord, many betray. See how they draw their sword across my way.

Take up my burden, Lord; strengthen and bless! Let judgment by Your Word their souls distress.

## 4 The Kingdom

*Pray Psalm 23.6.*

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
Forever.

*Sing Psalm 23.6.*

(The Gift of Love: [\*Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire\*](#))  
Goodness and mercy, full and free, shall ever after follow me,  
and in the house of God, my Lord, shall I abide forevermore!

*Read Acts 20.1-27; meditate on verses 25-27.*

*Preparation*

1. What was the substance of Paul's teaching?
2. How much of the counsel of God did he teach?

*Meditation*

Notice the emphasis Paul maintained in his preaching and teaching: the Kingdom of God (v. 25). Not merely forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Nor a Jesus Who will meet all your needs. On demand. No, Paul preached a new world, a new economy, a new community, a new morality, and a new reason for being: the Kingdom of God.

If we ever wonder about why the Kingdom of God is not coming on earth as it is in heaven any more than it is, the answer is simple. Few are preaching and teaching the Kingdom. Few are praying for it believingly. In churches today a form of “near Christianity” exists which emphasizes a gospel for you, and not the Gospel of the Kingdom. Until that changes, our churches and our influence for good will continue to decline.

Paul told these shepherds bluntly that they would not see him again (v. 25), so they'd better be ready to do the hard work of shepherding God's flock, which they saw in and learned from him. Paul insisted that he had taught *the whole counsel of God* to the elders and people in Ephesus (v. 27). We need to follow Paul's example in reading and searching, living and sharing all that God teaches throughout the entirety of His Word. Pastors and preachers may shy away from this, but we must not.

The times are desperate, and churches need to make sure they're following in the footsteps of Paul and Jesus, preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God and making disciples who seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness in everything they do.

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Paul is trying with all his might to teach us that the past is just that—the past.

We know about his past treachery and murderous ways towards the followers of Christ. He also knew that his past was common knowledge. And yet, that is not what he dwelt on.

What he did dwell on in this text was his present and his future. He was a new man. Christ had made him such, and that is what he boasted about. “But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight” (Jer. 9.24).

He wanted his present hearers to be relieved of their past, and to glory in their present and future with the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit has the same message for us through Paul's example. He wrote: "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20.26, 27). The eternal souls of all the people in his Personal Mission Field heard the Good News of Jesus from Paul, and they learned how to follow God's Law. That work was not shunned but declared. He was a new man in Christ, not hampered by his past sins.

Paul expounded on this way of thinking and living: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5.17). "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2.20).

We agree with John's assessment and remedy for our sin: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1.8, 9).

Forgiven. The past behind us. Now a new creation. Living because Christ lives in us. Are we, like Paul, ready to tell the whole counsel of God to those in our own Personal Mission Field?

*For reflection*

1. What do you understand by "the whole counsel of God"? Are you seeking the whole counsel of God in your own times with Him? Explain.
2. What's the difference between preaching and teaching the Kingdom of God and preaching and teaching forgiveness and eternal life?
3. Meditate on Romans 14.17, 18. What evidence would tell us that the Kingdom of God was coming on earth as it is in heaven?

*Believing that this was the last time they should see him, he appeals concerning his integrity. He had preached to them the whole counsel of God. As he had preached to them the gospel purely, so he had preached it to them entire; he faithfully did his work, whether men would bear or forbear. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Acts 20.17-27**

*Pray Psalm 23.1-5.*

Give thanks to God for His continuous leading, shepherding, and providing for you. Call on Him to be present with you as you go forth today to serve Him in your Personal Mission Field.

*Sing Psalm 23.1-5.*

(The Gift of Love: [\*Though I May Speak with Bravest Fire\*](#))

Because the Lord my Shepherd is I shall not want, for I am His!  
He makes me lie in pastures full; I rest in Him by waters still.

My soul He quickens and will bless; He leads in paths of righteousness.  
Though I may walk through death's dark vale, I shall not fear – He will not fail!

The Lord is ever by my side; His rod and staff with me abide.  
A table rich for me He spreads; with oil my Lord anoints my head.

## 5 Keep Watch

*Pray Psalm 28.1, 2.*

To You I will cry, O LORD my Rock:  
Do not be silent to me,  
Lest, if You *are* silent to me,  
I become like those who go down to the pit.  
Hear the voice of my supplications  
When I cry to You,  
When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.

*Sing Psalm 28.1, 2.*

(Angel's Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

I cry to You, our Savior, O, be not deaf to me!  
Lord, speak to me with favor, lest I should dying be.  
Hear now my supplications when for Your help I cry;  
Receive these, my oblations, before Your throne on high.

*Read Acts 20.1-31; meditate on verses 28-31.*

*Preparation*

1. What did Paul instruct the elders to do for the people in their churches?
2. What did he tell them to remember?

*Meditation*

The churches of the Lord will always be under attack, from without and within, as spiritual warfare rages continuously (v. 29). Pastors and elders must guard the flocks of the Lord from false teaching, self-interested leaders, and spiritual assault. Paul exhorted the shepherds to watch carefully over themselves, their teaching, and their flocks (vv. 28-30; cf. 1 Tim. 4.16; Heb. 13.17). Shepherding – the work Jesus outlined in John 10 and practiced faithfully throughout His earthly sojourn – is the Lord's way for making disciples and building His Church (cf. Eph. 4.11, 12).

The work of shepherding cannot be fulfilled in committees, on boards, or through programs. It takes shepherds being with and among the sheep entrusted to their care, getting to know them, building loving and trusting relationships, and watching over the progress of their souls with vigilance and prayer (Heb. 13.17).

But the work of watching over God's flock also requires people who are willing to be shepherded, who submit to faithful shepherds and accept the teaching and pastoral oversight they receive (cf. 1 Thess. 5.12, 13). Absent such diligent shepherding, churches will not be filled with disciples, and the Lord's flocks will not flourish as He intends.

And the paucity of true disciples in our day is a symptom of shepherding deficiency.

The strength and stability of a local church is not in its programs, budgets, or facilities. It's in its shepherds. Faithful, self-denying, Spirit-led, Scripture-loving shepherds. Paul understood this. Do we?

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Paucity. Now there's a word that sums up the state of shepherding in the church today. Here is the definition: the presence of something only in small or insufficient quantities or amounts; scarcity. And here are some synonyms: sparseness, dearth, shortage, rarity, poverty, deficiency, famine, meagerness, shortfall.

Are we guilty as charged?  
Is there a paucity of shepherds?  
Or a paucity of sheep?  
Maybe a combination of both?

Paul warned of this happening. For three years he was not only telling the Good News, but he was warning of the bad news that would creep in by “savage wolves” from outside the faith, and those speaking perverse things from inside the faith (Acts 20.29, 30). Those who would want to draw more attention to themselves than to God. Perhaps to have a following?

Peter wrote about problems that would occur within the church. His warning encompassed the same theme, and he even specifically mentioned Paul’s writing on the subject.

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things [the new heavens and the new earth]:

1. Be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless.
2. Consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as our brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand.
3. Untaught and unstable people twist his words to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.
4. You, therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.
5. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
6. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” (2 Pet. 3.14-18)

We must not succumb to the paucity of shepherding – the deadly shepherding deficiency syndrome. So in battle against it, we will say with Joshua: “...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh. 24.15). And with David: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” “Our cup runs over” (Ps. 23.1, 5). Never a scarcity, dearth, or shortfall with Him.

Keep watch. We have been warned by both Paul and Peter.  
“Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock” (Acts 20.28).

For we were purchased with “the precious blood of Christ” (Acts 20. 28; 1 Pet. 1.19).

*For reflection*

1. What does the work of shepherding look like in your church?
2. What is your responsibility for shepherding the people in your Personal Mission Field?
3. What can you do to encourage other believers to shepherd those to whom God has sent them?

*Christ's sheep are very dear to him, for he has bought them dearly. He wants his shepherds to cherish them; he commits them to none but those who love him. Peter Riedemann (1506-1556), Confession of Faith 13*

*Pray Psalm 28.6-9.*

Praise and thank the Lord for Jesus, our Good Shepherd. Rejoice in Him. Seek His strength and protection for this day. Call on the Lord Jesus to shepherd you through all your work for Him this day.

*Sing Psalm 28.6-9.*

(Angel's Story: [O Jesus, I Have Promised](#))

Blessed be the Name of Jesus, for He will hear our prayer.

His strength protects and shields us with mercy and with care.

*Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20*

In You our heart rejoices; You help us by Your Word.  
To You we raise our voices to praise and thank You, Lord.

Our strength are You, O Savior, our strong defense and sure.  
Anointed with Your favor, we rest in You secure.  
Save us, and bless us, Jesus, upon us turn Your face;  
with shepherd's care, Lord, keep us forever in Your grace.

## 6 A Final Word

*Pray Psalm 77.1-3.*

I cried out to God with my voice—  
To God with my voice;  
And He gave ear to me.  
In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord;  
My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing;  
My soul refused to be comforted.  
I remembered God, and was troubled;  
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.  
*Selah*

*Sing Psalm 77.1-3.*

(Leoni: [\*The God of Abraham Praise\*](#))

My voice to God shall rise; I seek Him on His throne.  
In days and nights of trouble I seek God alone!  
When I remember Him, then am I sore distressed!  
My spirit faints and longs to find in Him its rest.

*Read Acts 20.1-38; meditate on verses 32-38.*

*Preparation*

1. Of what did Paul remind the elders?
2. How did they respond to him?

*Meditation*

The Ephesians doubtless shared of their resources with Paul – we don't see him chastising them as he did the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9) – but money was never an issue with Paul. Ministry was everything, building up the Body of Christ and helping every believer enjoy their inheritance in the Lord (v. 32). He worked hard at shepherding; and he expected these elders to take up the baton and continue that work.

Only the Word and grace of God can sustain the ongoing work of Christ (v. 32); but God is pleased to carry on the ongoing work of Jesus through faithful men and women who devote themselves selflessly to guarding, nurturing, and building-up the Body of Christ. Paul had set an example for these men (vv. 33, 34) and trained them, devoting many long hours to their preparation. He knew what lay ahead for them, both in the work of shepherding God's flock and the dangers of spiritual warfare. He instructed them, following Jesus, to set their hearts for serving others (v. 35).

Paul then commended the shepherds of Ephesus to the Lord in prayer (v. 36). Only Jesus can build His Church (Matt. 16.18), and He does so through the shepherds and their flocks. What Paul told the shepherds at Ephesus he doubtless told elders, pastors, and church leaders everywhere he went.

And they loved him for it (vv. 37, 38).

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

What if you were watching late night television, and on came a commercial that promised to: Build you up; give you an inheritance among the saints; give you a heart to support the weak; and assure you that it is more blessed to give than receive. Would you buy it?

Without having to pay shipping and handling, or swallow a pill, we can have all the above-mentioned things.



How? Through God and the Word of His grace: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8.32)

We have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1.8)

We have been given eternal life with God. (Rom. 5.8)

We have been given the instruction book that explains how to live out these promises now (Col. 3.16, 17):

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Paul did not leave them with the final word of “see you in heaven”. No. He left them with the commission to “get busy”:

“Finish your race with joy” (Acts 20.24).

“Declare the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20.27).

“Take heed to yourselves...shepherd the church” (Acts 20.28).

“Work hard...Jesus paid for all of this with His blood” (Acts 20.28).

“Watch...remember...imitate me as I imitate Christ” (Acts 20.31; 1 Cor. 11.1).

“Pray” (Acts 20.36; 1 Thess. 5.17).

“And it’s OK to cry when you are sad” (Acts 20.37, 38).

All this, free at our fingertips, in His holy Word.

*For reflection*

1. How does the grace of God work to further the ongoing work of Jesus? How does it work in you?
2. Paul held out large expectations for those who became followers of Christ under his ministry. Why did he do that?
3. So much of what is involved in being a Christian comes back to the Bible – God’s Word. Why is that?

*If the Holy Ghost has made ministers overseers of the flock, that is, shepherds, they must be true to their trust. Let them consider their Master’s concern for the flock committed to their charge. It is the church He has purchased with his own blood. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 20.28-38*

*Pray Psalm 77.11-20.*

Recall God’s saving work in the past, beginning with His deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Praise and thank Him for your own salvation. Look to Him to shepherd you through the trials and work of this day.

*Sing Psalm 77.11-20.*

(Leoni: [\*The God of Abraham Praise\*](#))

Now let us call to mind Your deeds and wonders, Lord,  
and meditate on all Your works and praise Your Word.  
Full holy is Your way, great God of earth and heav’n.  
To You, O God of strength and pow’r all praise be giv’n!

The waters and the deeps all tremble ‘neath Your hand.  
The clouds give forth, the sky resounds across the land.  
Your lightning flashes forth and lights the earth around;  
we feel beneath our feet the trembling of the ground.

Your way leads through the sea; Your path the water parts.  
Your footprints are to us deep mysteries in our hearts.

*Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20*

As then by Moses' hand and Aaron's law-filled voice,  
You led Your sheep, lead us that we may all rejoice!

## 7 Paul's Race and Ours

*Pray Psalm 51.14, 15.*

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God,  
The God of my salvation,  
*And* my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.  
O Lord, open my lips,  
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

*Sing Psalm 51.14, 15.*

(Aughton: *He Leadeth Me*)

Deliver us, from guilt, O Lord, You Who have saved us by Your Word;  
and let our tongues Your mercy bless, and sing of Your great righteousness!  
*Refrain vv. 15, 18*  
Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!  
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

*Read Acts 20.1-38; meditate on verse 24.*

*Preparation*

1. How many different cities are mentioned in Acts 20?
2. How many different disciples are mentioned?

*Meditation*

We glimpse the mind and perspective of Paul in this verse. He saw himself as running a race, a race of ministry to embody and proclaim the Gospel of the grace of God. When you're in a race – and Paul was here thinking of a marathon or other long-distance race – your mind is focused on and your energy is applied to every next step, so that you continue making progress toward the finish. Reflecting on Paul's various journeys, we can see why he would think this way. From Antioch in Syria to Cyprus to southern Asia, up to Troas and over to Macedonia and Achaia, back to Asia, and 'round the circuit again – city after city, Paul preached, taught, and made disciples; and we see the fruit of this ministry here in Acts 20.

We're not Paul, and we're not likely to run so large a race nor to attract so many disciples and colleagues to join us in it. But we have a race to run nonetheless, and it's as important to the Lord Who sends us into our Personal Mission Field as Paul's race was. The circuit of our lives is defined by the places we go and the people we encounter there. We race among them week after week. Are we living and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, and of the King Who has triumphed over the grave? Are we, like Paul, making and enlisting disciples into this race?

Paul wrote that his life was a pattern – an example or template – for all who believed in Jesus (1 Tim. 1.14-17). It's a pattern of Kingdom vision, Holy Spirit fruit and power, continual striving forward to know Jesus, showing and telling the grace of the Lord at every opportunity, building others up in the faith, starting and ordering churches as the Body of Christ, encouraging the brethren, and pouring out His soul and strength to make disciples.

Our race may be smaller than Paul's, but it's no different, and it matters just as much. Race on!

*Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162*

Last night our granddaughter Reagan was given the Timothy Award from Awana, at her church, for learning all the required Bible memory verses for her entire tenure there. Quite an accomplishment. When she received the award, she was asked what her favorite verse was, and why. This is what she said: "For I am not

ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek' (Rom. 1.16). So we should not be ashamed to share the Gospel with everyone."

And I say to Reagan, "Thank you for being so courageous in sharing your faith and for being such a good example, like Paul, for all the rest of us!"

Imagine how simplified our lives would be, and joy-filled, if we could look at them the way Paul looked at his. When told in city after city that his life was in danger he just said, "Those things don't move me because that is not the main concern of my life." Well, what was the main concern of his life? To finish his calling with joy and to continue to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God. Just that.

He was not ashamed of the gospel, nor was he afraid to share it, even in peril of losing his own freedom and possibly his life (Acts 20.23). Like Jesus, he was looking to the joy set before him (Heb. 12.2). The writer of Hebrews also alludes to the idea of life being a race and encourages us, like Paul did, to run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb. 12.1).

We have this calling: to share the Gospel, to live according to God's Law, to love Him supremely, and to love and serve others. If we, like Reagan and Paul, can keep our focus honed-in on those important things, everything else that seems important and takes up so much of our time and energy, will simply fade into the background music of our lives.

"I will run the course of Your commandments, for You shall enlarge my heart."

"I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end." (Ps. 119.32, 112)

"Race on!"

*For reflection*

1. What is the "Gospel of the grace of God"? Write a brief outline of what you might share with someone in your Personal Mission Field?
2. Why should we not be ashamed of the Gospel?
3. How will you run your race for Jesus and the Gospel today? What opportunities are before you? How should you prepare?

*The powerful influences of the Holy Spirit bind the true Christian to his duty. Even when he expects persecution and affliction, the love of Christ constrains him to proceed. None of these things moved Paul from his work; they did not deprive him of his comfort. It is the business of our life to provide for a joyful death. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 20.17-27*

*Pray Psalm 51.16-19.*

Let the Lord search your heart. Listen for His prompting or convicting voice as you consider your hopes, dreams, desires, and aspirations. Confess and repent of any affections or desires that are keeping you from pursuing the ongoing work of Christ. Commit yourself to serving Him as a living sacrifice today. Pray that He will continue His goodness to you and through you throughout your Personal Mission Field.

*Sing Psalm 51.16-19.*

*(Aughton: He Leadeth Me)*

No sacrifice, no offering would You have us, Your people, bring;  
But broken spirits, cleansed of lies, and pure hearts You will not despise.

*Refrain v. 15, 18*

*Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20*

Lord, open now our lips to raise to You sweet songs of joyous praise!  
Thus let Your favor on us fall, and build and strengthen Zion's wall!

Now build Your Church, raise high the wall of those who on Your mercy call.  
And take our lives and let them be sweet sacrifices, Lord, to Thee!

*Refrain vv. 15, 18*

*Paul's Legacy (1): Acts 20*

*For reflection or discussion*

1. What can we learn from Paul's example and teaching about the role of the Word of God in a believer's life, and in the life and work of a church?
2. What is the work of shepherds in a local church? How can we know when a local church is being shepherded as the Lord intends?
3. We've been thinking about the *launch* of the ongoing work of Christ and how it becomes *established* in a local church, so that this church can begin to *disperse* the Gospel and *replicate* the ongoing work of the Lord. Where does your church fit in that template?
4. What does it mean to live in the tension between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 19.30-21.6?

*For prayer*

## The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.