

RECAP

This week's focus: Paul's goal was to "finish the race and complete the task" that God had given him to do. --- We must make an impact for God's kingdom, we have one life to live, and that life is meant to be spent and not saved.

The apostle Paul changed the world as few other men have ever done. He spent many years of his ministry in prison, unable to move about freely. He contended with fierce opposition both from outside and inside each church. And yet, after three missionary journeys and 25–30 years of ministering, he left a lasting impact on the world, not only in his time but for all times. The heart of Paul's strategy was his unwavering commitment to establish and strengthen local churches.

In our text, we see and feel Paul's tearful realization that his time together with fellow disciples and elders was about to come to an end. Their timing of departure appears providential, enabling us to identify with Paul's sorrowful parting from those who he'd never again see in his life as recorded in chapter 20. In general terms, Paul knew what would have happened when he returned to Jerusalem: imprisonment and persecution. He was also confident that they would never see his face again. His last words to these beloved saints were just as relevant and applicable to Christians today as they were to those who heard them personally. Let us listen well to what the Spirit of God has to say to us through Paul's parting words.

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



Acts 20:17-38

SHARE (5-10 min)

Icebreaker Question: What do you want to be remembered for in this life? What is your legacy that you want to leave behind? What changes will you need to do to make that happen starting today?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Acts 20:17-38

1. What about the message on Sunday was helpful? What was difficult for you to grasp or to understand?
2. In order to get into the emotion of the passage, think back to the last time you had to say goodbye to someone knowing you weren't going to see in a long time or ever again. What was that experience like? Why is it hard to say goodbye?
3. What part of Acts 20:17-38 do you find to be thought-provoking and interesting?
4. As Paul says goodbye to the Ephesian elders, he was confident about his character. He said that he served the Lord with great humility (vs 19). How would you describe your character? What part of your character would you like to see develop and grow?
5. Paul had a burden to preach the gospel. Maybe you are not a preacher, but how does a burden for the gospel grow in your life?
6. In verse 23, Paul speaks to the challenges and hardships that he regularly faced throughout his ministry. Hard times can lead to hard hearts and it's important in those times not to lose your love. How do we do that?
7. Look at verses 28-31. How valuable is the Church to God? How much worth did he assign to it? How does this compare to the way that the world values the church? How does this compare to the way that you value the church? How are you called to care for the church?
8. Generosity rarely happens naturally. It's a discipline we need to build consistently over time. What do you need to change in your life to become more generous?

Response (15 min)

Take a few moments and reflect on what the biggest take away was for you from this message and your discussion. Share it with the group.