

Acts 20:18-38 Final Instructions For the Church

- I. The Description of a Witness (18-21) (Paul reviews his ministry among them)
 - A. A Life of Service (18-19)
 1. Paul lived and worked with them – he was deeply involved in their lives (18)
 - a. He wasn't just handing out advice or giving theology lessons
 - b. He was with them at all times. He invested his life among them in order to see them grow in Christ
 - i. They saw his testimony lived out before them
 - ii. They saw his love for them which backed up his preaching
 - c. He was with them in good times and bad times
 - d. As Christ's witnesses, we are called to disciple others by investing our lives in them
 2. Paul served the Lord in Humility (19)
 - a. The word "served" is not just "to work for," it denotes working as a slave for Christ
 - i. The great Apostle did not lord over the people of the church
 - ii. He did not "serve" God by promoting himself or seeking high position among them
 - b. He served Christ for Christ's sake, placing the believers above himself
 3. Paul served through tribulation, sorrow, and trials
 - a. He shed many tears as he served God with the believers
 - b. He served through the trials of the Jews plotting against him
 - B. A Life Proclaiming Truth (20-21)
 1. Unashamed
 - a. Paul did not keep any doctrine back from the believers
 - b. Paul was not ashamed of the truth of the gospel even when it seemed that all the world was against him
 - c. Paul knew it was profitable for the church and so he was unashamed in declaring it to them
 - d. We must be unashamed in declaring the truth of Jesus even when it means we are marginalized, persecuted, or face suffering
 2. In Every Setting
 - a. Paul preached publically and privately from house to house
 - b. Paul took every opportunity regardless of the venue to teach and preach so the church would grow and be strengthened

- c. We must take every opportunity regardless of where we are or what company we are with to both evangelize the lost and disciple the brethren
- 3. To Every Person
 - a. Paul declared the truth to both Jew and Gentile
 - b. Paul was not selective about what kind of people he testified to – everyone, regardless of their hatred or their openness to the gospel saw and heard Paul’s preaching
- 4. The Content of Paul’s Testimony (21)
 - a. Repentance Toward God
 - i. Although many people deny it, there is no gospel or salvation without repentance
 - ii. Repentance toward God is not the same as simply being sorry that something happened
 - Repentance is for having offended God’s law and God’s nature
 - Repentance toward God is seeking to be right in His eyes, not necessarily making a show for men’s eyes
 - b. Faith in Jesus Christ
 - i. This is turning in trust to the savior’s death, burial, and resurrection for atonement
 - ii. This is not just believing that he exists
 - c. Faith in Christ and Repentance are two sides of the same coin
 - i. There is no true repentance toward God that does not turn in faith to the only savior for salvation
 - ii. There is no true faith in Christ that does not turn from sin in repentance
 - d. This is what Paul may mean by declaring what is profitable
- II. Faithfulness to God’s Purpose (22-27)
 - A. Facing Uncertain Events (22-23)
 - 1. Paul now describes his prospective future in Jerusalem
 - 2. Paul trusts in the Holy Spirit’s Leading him to Jerusalem
 - a. Notice that Paul understands that the Spirit is compelling Him to go back to Jerusalem
 - i. How do you think he knows this?
 - ii. What does the “compelling” of the Holy Spirit look like?
 - b. Notice also that Paul is not given the plan of God for him. He only knows that he must go
 - i. Why does God often not give us the whole understanding of his purposes?

- ii. Does God still “compel” us to act without all the facts of what will take place?
- c. Notice that Paul says that the Spirit is testifying to Him in every city that imprisonment and hardship await him?
 - i. How is the Spirit testifying this to him?
 - ii. Could it be that in every city Paul is facing increasing persecutions?
 - iii. Why does Paul see the events happening to him as the testimony and will of the Spirit?

B. Living For Christ’s Mission (24)

- 1. Paul is empowered by two overriding convictions
 - a. First – His life is not valuable for his own comfort and good
 - b. Second – His life’s value is found in him finishing the course of his ministry – which is bearing witness to Jesus
- 2. Paul is Resolute in his purpose for living
 - a. He believes his life is a course that has divine purpose
 - i. He has a mission – He knows God is using him
 - ii. He has a race to run – He does not live for his own desires or needs
 - iii. He knows that nothing happens by accident
 - b. He believes his life is a ministry
 - i. He has been commissioned by God and bears the responsibility of his charge – He received his call directly from the Lord. This wasn’t just his choice.
 - ii. He has been commissioned to proclaim, teach, and explain the gospel fulfillment
 - He must proclaim the gospel of God’s grace
 - What is important about the grace he preaches and why is it so offensive?
 - He is called to be a witness of what he has seen and heard. Remember he wasn’t an eyewitness to the crucifixion and resurrection but his conversion experience will be proclaimed at every trial he testifies at.
 - c. He desires only to finish God’s purpose for his life
 - i. He will go to Jerusalem and Rome even if it costs him his life – as he believes it will
 - ii. His goal is to be used, not simply to retire in comfort

C. Faithful to Christ’s Calling (25-27)

1. Paul will not see them again (25)
 - a. He is willing to follow Christ's call wherever it leads
 - b. He is willing to leave behind those he obviously loves
 - c. Notice that it says here that he has been preaching the gospel of the kingdom
 - i. Many people claim the gospel of Christ and the gospel of the kingdom are different messages
 - ii. Paul was preaching Jesus and calls this the gospel of the kingdom
 - iii. Why is Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection the fulfillment of the OT kingdom?
2. Paul is Innocent of the Blood of all men (26-27)
 - a. Paul declares his innocence because he has preached the full counsel of God to them
 - b. Paul has not "shunned" (withheld) anything of God's word and will for them
 - c. Notice that by saying this, Paul implies that to withhold the fullness of God's word and preach only our pet doctrines is to be guilty of the blood of men
 - i. What does that say about the responsibility of the witness?
 - ii. What does that say about the responsibility of the witness to study to show himself approved?
 - d. Paul is saying that he bears no responsibility for those who have rejected the gospel
 - i. He was called to testify and declare the whole truth
 - ii. We likewise are called simply to be obedient in being a witness – the results are up to God.

III. Caring For the Brethren (28-35) (Paul's Instructions to the Elders)

A. Shepherding the Flock (28-31)

1. Watch Over the Flock (28)
 - a. They are to first "take heed" watch over themselves
 - b. They are to watch over the flock God has made them overseers over
 - i. Notice that the Holy Spirit has placed them where they are
 - ii. Notice that the Holy Spirit has placed people under them to be shepherded
 - c. They are to feed the flock of God
 - i. They are to continually give the church the word of God
 - ii. Notice that the main task of the overseer is to bring the word of God to the people of God
 - d. They are to value the flock of God

- i. Paul makes a point to make sure they understand that these people are those for whom Jesus shed His blood
 - ii. To think lowly of them is to think lowly of the sacrifice of Christ
 - e. As disciplers and witnesses, we are to feed and care for our fellow believers, looking upon them through the precious blood that Jesus shed for them
- 2. Beware of the Wolves (29-30)
 - a. Wolves will come in from outside (29)
 - i. They must be watchful as a shepherd guarding the sheep from those who would do them harm
 - ii. Many will come in to deceive and make a prey of the people of God
 - b. Wolves will arise from their own number (30)
 - i. The wolves aren't just from the outside of the church
 - ii. Many wolves grow out from the body itself, proving that they were never sheep.
 - They pervert the truth of God
 - They seek to draw away disciples after themselves
 - They desire the "honor" of being teachers without the sacrifice and servanthood that goes with it
- 3. Be Always on Alert (31)
 - a. Paul himself spent three years warning them tearfully about those who will try to deceive them
 - b. They are commanded to be alert and watchful for them
 - c. Paul gives them no room to "tolerate" or get along with those who pervert the truth and prey on the body of Christ
- B. Stand Firm on The Word (32)
 - 1. Paul commends them to God – He is leaving them in His hands
 - a. Paul trusts in the word of God to guide them sufficiently in everything
 - b. The word of God is able to build them up
 - c. The word of God is able to establish their inheritance among those who are being sanctified
 - i. Notice that the evidence of the inheritance is that they are being changed and sanctified into the image of God
 - 2. Paul implies that they should stand firm in the word in which Paul is sure will be effective in their lives and ministries
- C. Work Hard For The Weak (33-35)
 - 1. Paul reminds them that he coveted none of their money (33)

2. Paul led by example by working with his own hands to meet his needs (34)
 - a. He did not want to burden them in any way
 - b. He did not consider working hard to be at odds with what he was called to do
3. Paul exhorts them to work hard themselves (35)
 - a. They are not to feed off those who are poor and needy
 - b. They are to work hard so that they may give to those who are in need
 - c. Paul quotes Jesus' words that it is better to give than receive