

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

ACTS 19-20

A tourist traveling through southern Europe visited a cathedral that had a human skull on display. The guide told his group that it was the skull of the Apostle Paul.

The next day in a neighboring city the group entered another cathedral that also displayed a skull - *again, of the Apostle Paul*. One of the tourists complained, *“Now wait a minute! This is fishy. In two days we’ve seen two skulls that supposedly belonged to the Apostle Paul!”*

The tour guide replied, *“That’s right! The skull you saw yesterday was Paul as a young man, and the skull you saw today was Paul when he was an old man.”*

There were dozens of cities throughout Galatia and Asia, Macedonia and Greece that could've laid claim to having a special relationship with the Apostle Paul.

He was not a man who let the grass grow under his feet. He was always on the move - *sharing* the Gospel, and *starting* churches. At the end of Acts 18 Paul returns to Antioch, but after a brief stop he’s off again.

Acts 19 records Paul’s **third** missionary journey...

Verse 1, *“And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus.”* This was Paul's second visit to Ephesus. It was an important city in the Roman world. At the time its population was 300,000 people.

Ephesus was the commercial center of the wealthy region of Asia Minor. People called it, "The Treasure Chest of Asia." Ironically, Paul discovers these people who had-it-all financially, were lacking spiritually...

"And finding some disciples (Paul) said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." Remembered who'd just ministered in Ephesus? "Apollos." And recall Apollos' deficiency? In 18:25 tells us, "he knew only the baptism of John." He knew how to *turn from sin*, and *turn to Jesus*, but he didn't know how to *turn on the power of the Holy Spirit*. He was ignorant of the Spirit's baptism.

Acts 18 tells us Aquila and Priscilla had to take him aside and explain "the way of God more accurately."

Apollos had been guilty of trying to fulfill the *Great Commission*, while committing the *Great Omission*.

He didn't realize the Holy Spirit not only wants to *indwell us*, but He also wants to *empower us*. We can plug into the power of Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

And the missing ingredient in Apollos' teaching was being replicated in his listeners. They too believed in Jesus, but they also knew nothing of the Holy Spirit.

"And (Paul) said to (the Ephesians), "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." When Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and baptize, He provided us a formula...

Jesus said we should baptize believers “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

If the Ephesians had been baptized as Christians with this formula they would've at least heard of the Spirit. But rather than Christian baptism, they were baptized into John's baptism - a show of repentance.

“Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” When they heard *this*, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Which is another way to say they were *baptized as Christians*.

Sometimes, you'll run across folks who point to this verse and suggest if you haven't been baptized with this exact verbiage, “*in the name of the Lord Jesus*,” you haven't been biblically baptized. That's not true.

Again, the phrase “*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*” is just a way to indicate “Christian baptism.”

In fact, in the context of this passage - *if they'd been baptized as Christians they would've at least heard of the Spirit* - this indicates the baptismal formula, the proper wording, included mention of the “Holy Spirit.”

Whenever I baptize I use the language Jesus gave us in Matthew 28:19. I baptize the person “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

I was once baptizing our group in the Jordan River, when a busload of Europeans wanted to be baptized.

Asking a pastor to baptize folks is like saying sic'em to a bulldog. I baptized at least forty people, but I'll never forget the last one. When I raised him from the water, he wanted to be dunked again. When he came up the second time, he asked for one more immersion.

Later someone told me he wanted to be baptized three times - once for the Father, once for the Son, and once for the Holy Spirit. I'm not sure being baptized three times is biblical, but he understood the Scripture.

Verse 6, “**And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Now the men were about twelve in all.**” Before Paul arrived, *when the Ephesians first believed*, the Holy Spirit came quietly to indwell their hearts, but now He fills and overflows them.

And it wasn't so quiet. It got noisy! They spoke in ecstatic utterances. They praised God with the gift of tongues - in languages foreign to them. And they prophesied in their native tongue, *messages from God*.

Tongues are *praise*. Prophecies are *proclamation*.

Both tongues and prophecy are communicative bursts. They're like a popping a cork. The Holy Spirit that's inside us surges out of us with power. Tongues is us speaking to God. Prophecy is God speaking to us.

Tongues allows our spirit to vent its praise without our mind having to keep up. It bypasses our vocabulary with spontaneous language... Prophecy is God's bullhorn. It's God giving an instant message...

When Paul laid hands on the Ephesians the Holy Spirit came upon them and a sudden rush of power set off *speaking in tongues and words of prophecy*.

One New Year's Day, the Tournament of Roses parade was delayed by a float that ran out of gas. It was beautifully decorated with an assortment of roses. But the float sputtered, and eventually came to a halt.

It was quickly discovered that the organizers had forgotten to fill it with gas... Yet here was the irony: the float was sponsored by the Standard Oil Company.

A company with vast reservoirs of petro had ran out of gas. And this can happen to a Christian. We have a pipeline to God's power. His name is the Holy Spirit.

We should never run out of gas. We can ask God to continually to fill us and empower us with His Spirit.

Verse 8, "And (Paul) went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus."

This was philosophy forum. Tyrannus had a large meeting hall Paul rented out in the afternoons.

The Greek work day was from 7:00 to 11:00am, then from 4:00 to 9:00pm. From 11:00am to 4:00pm people beat the heat and broke for a siesta. Every afternoon folks went home and took a nice, long nap - *sounds like a great idea, doesn't it?* There was a saying at the time, "You'll find more people

sound asleep in Ephesus at 1:00 in the afternoon than at 1:00 in the morning!"

This passage gives us a glimpse at how hard Paul worked. For two years he made tents - mornings and evenings - then forfeited his siesta to teach the Bible.

Ministry was Paul's *passion*, not just his *profession*. I'm sure he figured he would take his siesta in heaven.

"And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Ephesus was the cultural hub, and from it the Gospel spread to the surrounding areas.

Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them." Notice Luke refers to these miracles as "*unusual*" even for Paul.

The "*handkerchiefs*" Luke mentions were work cloths that Paul used to wipe the sweat from his brow. They were his bandanas, so to speak. His Survivor buffs.

And his "*aprons*" was a cloth he wore to protect his clothes while he worked - and to wipe his hands. Both articles of clothing would be soaked with Paul's sweat.

I read where Jimi Hendrick's sweat bands once sold at auction for \$7000. Some poor fellow thought there was magic in the famous guitar player's sweat.

He figured if Jimi's sweat-stained DNA somehow trickled onto his hands he'd be able to play the guitar like Jimi. Of course, he was definitely disappointed.

But this was the idea pushing the preoccupation with Paul's sweatbands, and God used it to work miracles.

This brings up several questions... *Was there really something miraculous in apostolic perspiration?*

And does God ever use this kind of thing today? Is there anything to the *healing hankies* and *bandanas of blessing* promised by questionable preachers on late night infomercials? Does God resort to gimmicks?

I thought for God, healing power was *no sweat?*

Realize, Paul was human just like us. He called himself "*the chief of sinners.*" Certainly his glands didn't secrete supernatural sweat. What occurred here had nothing to do with *perspiration*, but *expectation*.

The Ephesians so associated Paul with God's power that the sense of closeness to the Apostle activated their faith. And God rewarded faith with His healing.

If you believe, but don't expect - do you really believe? Expectation is the trigger to faith. In the minds of the Ephesians God and Paul were so linked together that *his buff* stimulated *their belief* in God's healing.

And this is how it works with *the laying on of hands*, or *the anointing of oil*, or *the celebration of communion*, or *the raising of holy hands to God*, etc. - the props all serve the same purpose. God uses them to stimulate faith - and give the believer a point of contact where he or she can release their expectation in the miracle.

Verse 13, “Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.”

Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.” When God works supernaturally it’s glorious, but it can also bring out the whackos. Here Jewish exorcists tried to take advantage of the interest.

Notice Luke words, “*(they) took it upon themselves.*” Rather than called by God and empowered by His Spirit they were religious entrepreneurs. They thought they could mimic a miracle. And chief among the con artists were the sons of a Jewish priest named Sceva.

Notice too, Luke calls them “*itinerant Jewish exorcists*” which meant they traveled from place to place. They were always on the move. Thus, they never had to be accountable for their lack of success.

It seems these so-called exorcist were always on the lookout for a new incantation or formula they could employ in their trade. So when they saw Paul casting out demons in the name of Jesus they assumed *his wording* would work for them. So they gave it a try, “*We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.*”

But here’s what happened, verse 15, “*And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?”* Literally, “*Jesus I recognize, and Paul I am acquainted with; but who are you?”*”

Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.” Both the sons of Sceva and Paul spoke the name of Jesus to cast out demons. The difference was that Paul had a real relationship with the living Lord.

The Jews saw Jesus as a *spell*. Paul served Him as the *Savior*. The power of God is conveyed through *relationship* - not *rite* or *ritual* or *recitation*. It's *faith*, not *formulas* that unleash God's power in our lives.

Using the name of Jesus without a relationship with Jesus is like using a gun that's not loaded. These Jews ended up bruised, bloodied, and ran away in the buff.

We're called to go out in the name of Jesus and confront satanic strongholds, but we need to be sure we're *in touch* with Jesus before we *invoke* His name. There needs to be *possession* behind our *confessions*.

“This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.”

There was public confession of sin in Ephesus. People were openly renouncing their evil deeds.

“Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned *them* in the sight of all.” In the occult, even today, there are characters used in spells and incantations that are known as the “[Ephesian Letters](#).” Then

and now the city of Ephesus was infamous for its occult activity.

In Paul's day, when folks were saved they repented of their sin, and burned their *paranormal paraphernalia*.

“And they counted up the value of them, and *it totaled 50,000 pieces of silver.*” - this was the equivalent of the combined yearly salaries of 150 men.

When the Ephesians met Jesus what they formerly valued they saw as garbage. They tossed their horoscopes, Ouija boards, New Age crystals, tarot cards, and their Harry Potter Library into the bonfire.

Notice, they didn't hold a garage sale where they could make a profit off their sinful stuff. Rather they torched the remnants of their past life! They made a clean break with the past and pledged to follow Jesus!

When I first came to Jesus, years ago now, I had a pretty *expensive* record collection. I took it all to the dumpster and shattered the records. I ripped the tapes. I threw it all into the trash. *It was big moment for me...*

At the time, it was a costly commitment.

But I have no doubt I needed to get rid of my past.

This was a turning point in my life. Afterwards, what happened in me is what happened in Ephesus, verse 20, “*the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*”

“*When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and*

Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.”

Paul ultimately had his eyes set on the capitol of the empire, but his heart still pulled him toward Jerusalem.

Verse 22, “So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time. And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.” Recall “*the Way*” was one of the earliest names of Christianity.

But here’s what caused the commotion in Ephesus, “For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen. He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: “Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade. Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.” Demetrius was the union organizer for the *United Idol Workers of Asia*. He could see that Paul insistence on people turning from worthless idols to Jesus was cutting into their business.

He continues, “So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship.” Paul’s preaching and the spiritual awakening it had created had created a crisis for the status quo.

Ephesus was popular for many reasons, but its most famous landmark was a Temple to Diana. Pagans from the world-over worshipped the Greek fertility goddess.

The great temple to Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was larger than the Parthenon in Athens - imagine, 425 feet long, by 220 feet wide, by 60 feet high. It was surrounded by 127 marble columns. The whole temple was adorned with beautiful engravings and paintings. It was magnificent.

In contrast to the beauty of the temple the image of the idol Diana was ugly and grotesque. It was a squat figure, with a female face and covered, front and back, with mammary glands - a symbol of fertility. I suppose you could say the worship of Diana... *was a real bust!*

Of course, when you came to Ephesus it was important you left with a little trinket to show your friends where you were - a miniature replica of Diana.

Demetrius and the local silver-smiths made a bundle of money selling these souvenirs. Idolatry was big business and *the Gospel became a financial threat.*

And take note, this is how we put sin out of business, not by *picketing or protesting*. Don't worry so much about *the supply side*. Spread the Gospel and it cuts into *the demand*. Our job is to diminish sin's appeal.

If the demand shrinks the supply will disappear.

In the Welsh Revival of 1901 every tavern and pub in Wales went belly up, and guess how many anti-alcohol sermons were preached? **None!** Once people were touched by Jesus

and filled with the Holy Spirit people lost all interest in their booze. *Social reformation* came on the heels of a *spiritual transformation*. To really change society you start by changing people's hearts.

This is what happened in Ephesus. The Gospel *spread* and the *spreadsheet of the silversmiths shrunk*.

Because Demetrius' cronies felt threatened they try to enact legislation to squelch the Gospel. They meet to discuss the shrinking profits and stir up the crowd.

“Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, “Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!” So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.” Today, when you visit the ruins of Ephesus one of its main attractions is the huge theater where the mob rallied. We're told by the archeologists in the days of Paul it could seat over 25,000 people.

Here the union members erupt into a frenzy. They all start chanting, “*Great is Diana of the Ephesians!*”

And while they're chanting, they grab the first believers they can find - Gaius and Aristarchus. Ben Franklin once said, “a mob is a monster with heads enough, but no brains.” This was the case in Ephesus.

“And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him. Then some of the officials of Asia, who

were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.”

But you’ve got to love Paul’s courage. He thought, “*a stadium full of people - I can preach!*” To Paul there was no such thing as *opposition*, just *opportunities*.

Verse 32, “Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.”

The situation was total chaos. “And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.”

In the Roman world of the first century when a public uprising occurred someone usually blamed it on the Jews. Here, the Jewish leader in town, a man named Alexander, wants to make it clear that the Jewish community had nothing to do with Paul and his efforts.

But Alexander’s attempt backfired. “When they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” The sight of a Jew only inflamed their pagan loyalties.

Verse 35, “And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: “Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the *image* which fell down from Zeus?” Antiquity tells us the original statue of Diana was made of black stone. It was probably made of a meteor. The local lore claimed it came from Zeus, chief of the Greek gods.

The clerk continued, “Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly. For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.” Paul didn’t enter Ephesus and launch an anti-Diana campaign. He just preached the Gospel, and the light of Jesus had uncovered the darkness.

“Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.” This city official brought some reason to the frenzied crowd. He reminds them there were courts for legal grievances.

Then he warns, “For we are in danger of being called in question for today’s uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering.” Realize, the Roman empire frowned on any kind of public unrest. The clerk reminds the crowd they don’t want to attract the wrong kind of attention.

Ephesus had a Roman designation. It was called “a free city.” This came with special privileges, and curtailed Rome’s military authority. But an uprising would give the Romans a reason to enact martial law.

The last thing the city wanted was a crackdown... So “when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.” And apparently, all the people went home.

Chapter 20, “After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia.” Paul sails from Ephesus on the Turkish coast for Philippi and Thessalonica.

“Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece and stayed three months.” Paul ends up in Corinth, where he wrote his letter to the Romans.

“And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria (or home to Antioch), he decided to return through Macedonia.” Paul sniffed out an assassination attempt, and to avoid it he changed plans. Rather than sail, he went back into Macedonia.

And here’s the entourage that traveled with him. Call it **Paul’s posse**. It included seven men, “Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia - also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.”

One of Paul's reasons to return through Macedonia was to collect an offering for the famine-stricken church in Jerusalem. The men listed here were the people entrusted to transport the offering for their churches.

“But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.” Troas was on the Aegean Sea, 130 miles up the coast from Ephesus.

They waited a week for a ship departing for Syria.

Verse 7 “Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until *midnight*.” Notice a couple of points...

First, the early Christians met on the first day of the week. This might seem trivial, but think it through - for 1500 years Jews met to worship God on the last day of the week, the Sabbath. Why did the early Christians change their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday?

There's only one reason. Church meetings were a *celebration of the resurrection*. Something dramatic budged a ritualistic people out of a proud tradition. The transforming event was Jesus' victory over death.

Second, notice the Christians at Troas met Sunday night rather than Sunday morning. *And the reason?*

In pagan Rome Sunday was a *work day*, not a *day off*. Believers labored all day on Sunday. When their job ended, they met together to worship the Lord.

And **third**, Paul's ship sailed at sunrise. This was his last opportunity to speak to the believers in Troas, so he took off his watch. He didn't worry about parents getting the kids to bed, or guys going to work the next day - he preached until he had nothing left to say.

If Paul started at 7:00, this means he preached a five-hour sermon - *and you think I'm long winded!*

There's another detail about the room where Paul preached... in verse 8, "There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together."

In the first century, Christians were a strange, new minority. All kinds of rumors circulated about them.

They were accused of sexual promiscuity since they always talked about love... The practice of communion caused misconceptions. It was said that Christians ate the body of Christ - *were they cannibals?* Some said they even drank His blood - *were they vampires?*

Because of these suspicions the early church lit their meeting halls with an abundance of candlepower. They wanted the room so bright there would be no secrets.

Now you get a feel for the conditions in the meeting room at Troas... *A Sunday evening after a tiring day at work... a long-winded preacher... a stuffy, smoke-filled room... Poor ole Eutychus didn't have a chance!*

"And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep."

In fairness to Eutychus he probably went to the window to get some fresh air. He thought the night air would wake him up. But "He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead." His fall proved fatal. He fell three stories. Hit the dirt and died on impact. Drowsiness led to his death. I've had people get drowsy and fall out of a chair, but never a window!

Verse 10, "But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is

in him.” It reminds me of the man who fell asleep during the pastor’s sermon. The pastor shouted at the usher, “*Wake that fellow up?*” The usher shouted back at the pastor, “*You put him to sleep - you wake him up!*”

Here Paul is a responsible preacher. Since he put Eutychus asleep, he should wake him up. He falls on Eutychus - Elisha-style - and God works a miracle.

“*Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.*” *What a night!*

Paul raised the dead and served a meal. He went on fellowshiping until daybreak. It was finally time to go.

Of course, Eutychus is not the only person who’s dozed off. I know some Christians who doze off spiritually. They get sluggish, and sleepy, and fall...

And like Paul, the body of Christ needs to go to them and cover them, and revive them with our warmth.

We’ll resuscitate them with compassion. It’s love that awakens a cold heart and revives a slumbering spirit.

Verse 13, “*Then we (Luke speaks of himself and Paul’s posse’) went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.*”

From Troas to Assos was 25 miles. Paul could walk it as fast as his posse could sail. Apparently, Paul wanted to spend some time with the Lord. Since he stayed up all night, he decided to pray while he walked.

If you're have problems dozing off while you're praying... then be like Paul and pray while you walk.

“And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. We sailed from there, and the next *day* came opposite Chios. The following *day* we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next *day* we came to Miletus.” The ship was working its way eastward along the Turkish coast.

“For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.” The beach at Miletus was 28 miles south of Ephesus. If Paul had docked at Ephesus a thriving church - and his friends - would've forced him to stay. It would've been weeks on shore...

So he skips Ephesus, and from Miletus sends word to the elders that he's hosting a leadership summit.

In the book of Acts we have eight of Paul's sermons.

Most of his messages are from *Paul the evangelist* or *Paul the apologist*, but here we hear from *Paul the pastor*. His words on the beach reveal his love for the flock. They should reflect the heart of every pastor...

Verse 18, “And when they had come to him, he said to them: “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you...”

Paul was not a ivory tower preacher. He wasn't aloof.

Paul wasn't isolated from the people he served. He lived among them. Paul's ideas were lofty and heavenly - but his feet were firmly planted on the earth.

He lived among them, "Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews..." Everywhere he went Paul was persecuted. And most often it was by Jews.

Paul came "*serving the Lord with all humility...*" Too many pastors develop an entitlement mentality. They make a few sacrifices, but then think God, or people owe them. But not Paul. He was a *giver* not a *taker*.

He reminds them, "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you..." Paul kept back nothing. He left it all on the field. Why save a sermon for a rainy day, when today might be our last day.

"*To spend and be spent*" - was Paul's motto. The Apostle's goal was to die with nothing left in his tank.

Verse 20, "And (I) taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me."

Every where Paul traveled he was forewarned about trouble in Jerusalem. Yet the warnings didn't deter him.

Verse 24, "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.” A concern for his safety was not Paul's concern.

He had but one *pressing priority* - to finish his race with joy - to faithfully preach the gospel of God's grace.

“And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.” This was Paul's last visit with the Ephesians. He knew he'd never travel this way again.

“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*.” At the end of my journey this is what I hope to say. My goal as a pastor is to proclaim to you “*the whole counsel of God*.”

Too many pastors preach part and parcel. They dwell on their own pet subjects. But what their people really need is the whole counsel of God. It's been said, “*It takes the whole Bible to make a whole Christian*.”

At times I grieve there's not more of an appetite for this type of teaching. Wednesdays should be packed. I realize, a methodical approach is more demanding, but this is the diet it takes to create real, consistent growth.

Verse 28, “*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock...*” Notice, before a pastor *takes heed to the flock* he should *take heed to himself*. Pastors burn out on *ministry for God*, because they don't receive *ministry from God*. The neediest person I know is me!

A ministry won't last very long, or be successful, if you're pouring from an empty cup. Every minister's first priority is to take heed to himself, *then* to God's flock.

“Among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” An elder oversees and shepherds people who are dear to God - loved by God.

The Church was purchased with the blood of Jesus.

And a shepherd has two duties toward God's flock - *he leads and he feeds* - he oversees and undergirds.

Once a son bought his parents an exotic, tropical, talking bird. He paid thousands of dollars for this rare bird, and sent it to them as an anniversary gift. He thought it would keep them company in their old age.

After a few days he called his dad and asked how he liked the bird. The father replied, **“It was delicious. Your mother and I ate every bite!”** Pastors need to remember that the sheep are not for lamb chops.

The flock cost God the blood of His Son. God wants His flock to be *nurtured* not *sacrificed for the pastor*.

And God also wants the flock protected... **“For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.”** A faithful shepherd *feeds the flock*, a wolf *feeds on* the flock.

Predators fleece the flock to pad their own pockets.

“Also from among yourselves men will rise up...”

Wolves come from two directions - from *within* the church and from *without*. When the devil can't defeat a church, he likes to join it. He can sabotage it from the inside as easily as he can attack it from the outside.

Wolves come “speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Here's how to know a wolf - *rather than create followers of Jesus, he creates his own followers.* He draws folks after himself.

“Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” For three years Paul cared for them with tears.

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” *With spiritual predators on the prowl can there be any hope for the prosperity of God's flock?*

Yes! It's His Word that builds us up and guarantees our inheritance. Our safety is in the Scriptures. Paul taught them to continue in the word of God's grace.

Verse 33, “I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.” Paul wasn't after their money. As in Corinth, Paul made tents to support himself. He served the Ephesian church without being a financial burden.

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the

Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Paul was an example.

He could've demanded a salary. But he wanted to prove to the Ephesians that it's more blessed to give...

By the way, where did Paul get this quote from Jesus, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*"? We have no idea. It's not in the Gospels. He had another source... Verse 35 is called, "The Supreme Beatitude."

"And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship." As Juliet said to Romeo, "Parting is such sweet sorrow." Paul loved the church at Ephesians and the Ephesians loved Paul. Yet here, they say good-bye.

Here, grown men hug and cry. Tears drop in the sand... The elders leave encouraged and instructed, while Paul sets sail with the Ephesians on his heart.