Study of Acts – Discussion Notes Chapter 20

Introduction
As you know, our staff rotates writing the article in the weekly newsletter that is passed out each Sunday. The purpose of this article is twofold. It is to encourage and challenge the readers but it also affords the staff members an opportunity to share their heart with the people of our church. We write about what is on our heart and what God is teaching us that week. I consider the article an opportunity for me to be closely personal with the members of our church.

Chapter 20 gives us a unique glimpse into the intimacy between Paul the great missionary and the believers to whom he ministered. We see Paul realizing he may not see many of these people again, so he takes the opportunity to speak from the heart. It seems Paul shares the same twofold purpose in his final discussions.

Content
1. The value of co-laborers to a pastor (vs. 4-6).

Notice how the number of men supporting and helping Paul has grown. This group of men are from various areas where Paul has established churches. As we read chapter 20, we get the impression they were deeply concerned for Paul’s safety and for assisting him in his ministry.

I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you who supports this pastor in the work I do here. There is no way I could do the work that is done here without the enormous work of volunteers in this church. I believe supporting your pastor is a biblical principal that God expects of His children. For all who do this, I am extremely grateful.

With that said, I must also implore you to avoid the temptation to undermine or criticize the work of your pastor whether it is me or someone else. Your pastor whoever it might be needs your prayers, encouragement and support. When we criticize the pastor or other believers, we are tearing down the church and without doubt, God is not pleased.

12 Now we ask you, brothers, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, 13 and to regard them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 HCSB

Paul had some great men supporting him in his ministry. They even helped save his life on more than one occasion. As pastor, I am grateful to all who pray for me and support my work here. Thank you.

2. For Fun: You would do well to stay awake during the preaching (vs. 7-12).

*How long did Paul preach before Eutychus fell asleep?* He preached until midnight.

*What happened to Eutychus and what can we learn from this?* He fell out of the window and fell 3 stories down to his death.

*How long did Paul continue to preach after he checked on Eutychus?* Till dawn

So, you should support your pastor if for no other reason, I do not preach nearly as long as Paul did.
3. The impact of relationships in our spiritual growth (vs. 17-31).

*Why did Paul decide not to sail through Ephesus (vs. 16)?*

Paul was eager to get on to Jerusalem. One gets the impression that he so loved the people from the church at Ephesus that he knew he would not be able to make it a quick visit. He knew it would be a long process because he loved being with them.

I have known pastors who intentionally would not allow themselves to become too close with their congregation. It was as if they wanted to keep their distance so as not to ever be hurt. Personally, I find this foolish and non-biblical. How can you minister to people unless you sincerely love them? It is my desire to know and love the members of my congregation. The people that make up this congregation are my friends and that is worth the risk of being hurt or disappointed one day.

*Who does Paul send for to come and speak with him?* Paul summons the elders of the church at Ephesus to give them some final instructions. Even though these people have become his friends, it is also evident from the text that Paul never held back in his preaching and teaching.

Notice that twice Paul says, “I did not shrink back from proclaiming to you.” Paul goes on to say in verse 26, “I am innocent of everyone’s blood.”

*What do you think Paul was saying when he said, “I am innocent of everyone’s blood.” (vs. 26)?*

Paul was saying, he preached the truth of the gospel. He implored them to receive God’s salvation and to surrender to the lordship of Jesus Christ. In other words, he did not hold anything back.

Illus: Suppose your parents had failed to teach you something critical or warn you about the pitfalls of something. Later in life you would ask why they never told you about that and the associated dangers. If they really loved you, why would they not teach you the hard lessons of life?

Because of his calling and out of love for those he was called to reach, Paul gave it everything he had. Sometimes as pastors, we say tough things and we step on toes. Not all messages are “feel good” messages. But every message is out of love and a desire to lead people to a closer walk with Christ.

4. The grace of sanctification (vs. 32-35).

*What does Paul mean in verse 32, “And now I commit you to God and to the message of His grace”?*

The Lord’s will is for each of us to become all He intends us to be. God’s grace is not just for our salvation; it is also for our spiritual growth. Holiness is belonging to the Lord and being remade in His image.

The word “saint” also has its root in the word “holy.” It means to be set apart, called, chosen, belonging to the Lord. God’s purpose for us is that we grow spiritually to become like our Lord. We are meant to be grown-up saints!

We should be able to say, “I’m not who I used to be; I’m not who I ought to be; but praise the Lord, I’m on my way to becoming all that I was intended to be.”

Paul’s parting words to the elders of the church was to encourage them in their sanctification.

32 “And now I commit you to God and to the message of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all who are sanctified. Acts 20:32 HCSB

The Christian life is an adventure in growing up to become who God intends us to be. Each one of us is called to be sanctified for the Lord’s work.
Some professing believers resist completely and turn away from sanctification. These are usually the believers who find some reason to be angry with God or the church. They look for excuses to build up a wall between them and God or them and the church. They are often the harshest critics of the work of the church.

Others remained too self-focused to surrender to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. These believers tend to be on a spiritual roller coaster. One week they are on fire for the Lord and other weeks they are nowhere to be found.

Still other Christians pursue the adventure of sanctification with great zeal. These are the believers who see God working in wondrous ways in their life and others. They have struggles from time to time but if the truth were to be known, they would not trade their troubles for the joy of seeing God lead their path and use them daily.

The secret to sanctification is “the message of His grace.” The unmerited forgiving love of the Lord enables us to own the failures of our past and yet disown them in the Lord’s mercy. His grace allows us to move forward to grow in our stature with Christ.

**Conclusion**

Growth in Christ takes place when we are willing to give away that for which we are naturally possessive. In verse 35, Paul quotes Jesus when he says, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

In order to fully experience all that God has intended for us, we must relinquish our rights to our time, talents, money and even our life. We must be willing to give of ourselves in order to help others discover that which we have already found.

Sanctification is the process of being filled with the Lord’s Spirit. The more we receive of Him, the more we have to give to others. And, the more we give to others, the more we receive of Him.