

Abide in Me

John 15:4
*Bible studies for disciples
who make disciples*



Volume 8 - Number 6

The Week of November 6, 2022

Telling the Truth
The Gospel Portrayed
Acts 20:18-35

In previous sermons we examined, we saw how the Gospel was presented to non-believers. In this passage, the Gospel is not so much “presented” as it is “portrayed” to a gathering of Christians from Ephesus. This passage is the only recorded sermon of Paul in Acts given only to Christians. This speech is Paul’s farewell address to fellow elders he had ministered closely with for three years. As he heads back to Jerusalem, he does not expect to ever see them again, so these are his final words to them. Although this sermon was originally given to the Ephesian Elders long ago, it still has much to say to every disciple who wants to know what the Christian life looks like. In this text we discover a series of qualities that serve to define and portray the Christian life.

¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. ³² And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

EXPLORING PAUL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS TOGETHER

1. In Paul's message, he references his own life events as an example of how believers are to live, viewing his life as a series of moments that he can use to teach others.

- What aspect of Paul's life stands out to you, and why?
- Of all the qualities discussed in the message, which one(s) describes you the best? The least?

2. Verse 19. Paul was consistently serving the Lord. He often referred to himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. Paul saw himself first and foremost as a servant, and then as an Apostle. His inner identity was evident by his outer actions.

- Do you see yourself as a servant? If not, how do you primarily see yourself?
- What would be different if you adopted a humble servant's mindset at home, at work, at church?
- Can you identify how you currently serve God? How has God gifted/wired you for service?

3. Verse 19b. Paul served faithfully while suffering through trials. Trials are hard, but trials can refine our faith.

- Can you look back at trials you suffered through and see how they may have helped you grow in your faith?
- How do you approach trials now?
- How do you encourage a believer who is going through a trial?

4. Verses 20-21. Paul constantly shared the gospel to both Jews and Greeks. In other words, no one was "off-limits." He shared the gospel with everyone and anyone who would listen.

- Do you find it hard or easy to share the gospel with others? Why is that?
- When you try to share your faith, do you "testify" (bear witness) of Jesus Christ?

Paul summed up the gospel with two words: repentance and faith. Do you see repentance and faith as a one-time event or a lifestyle for you?

- What do you think of “preaching the gospel to yourself” every day?

5. Verse 23. Paul submitted to the Spirit knowing he would face imprisonment and afflictions.

- How does he arrive at that point of surrender (v. 24)?
- Describe a time you followed the Spirit’s leading. Was there risk involved? How did you determine what you should do?
- What was the focus and priority of Paul’s life? What is the focus and priority of your life? How can your life align with gospel priorities?

6. Paul’s whole sermon is one example of how he supported the local church. Verse 28 tells us that God obtained the church with His own blood.

- What does that tell us about the value God places on the church? What value does the local church have in your life?
- Is belonging to a church optional in Scripture, or is it part and parcel of following Christ?
- How do you support the church?

7. Verses 33-35. Paul coveted no one’s money or material possessions.

- Do you find yourself longing for what others have? How can we learn to be free from greed?
- Paul was a sacrificial giver. How would you describe your giving? (Are you a surplus giver or a sacrificial giver?)
- Why is giving hard? Why does it take faith to give?
- Is giving for every Christian? Or is sacrificial giving optional?
- Do you see giving as a duty or a delight? How does Jesus’ words, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” impact your attitude about giving?

