

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

by

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

THE SURRENDERED LIFE

(Acts 20:17-38)

OUTLINE

Key verse - 24

Paul stopped at Miletus - wanted opportunity to bid farewell to the elders of Ephesus - bade them a life-long farewell - addressed them - commended them to God in prayer.

1. That Paul's life was surrendered is shown by his faithfulness in the past.

- A. He had been diligent (18, 20, 26, 31, 34).
- B. He had worked under great difficulties (19, 20).
- C. He did not seek personal gain (33, 34).
- D. He preached a full Gospel (20, 21, 27).

2. Paul called the elder to surrender their lives to Christ.

- A. To feed the church (28).
- B. To set an example for members of the church (35).
- C. To exercise discipline in the church (29, 30).

3. That Paul's life was surrendered is shown by the brave front as he looked forward.

- A. He had evidence that bonds awaited him (23).
- B. He was not moved from his purpose (24).
- C. He counted not his life dear (24).
- D. He told the elders they would see his face no more (25, 38).

4. That Paul's life was surrendered is shown by his prayer and parting (36-38).

Sailing from Assos down the western coast of proconsular Asia by Mitylene, Chios, and Samos, Paul arrived about the fourth day at Miletus. Miletus was a seaport at the mouth of the river Maeander, thirty six miles south of Ephesus. Paul did not have time to sail into the harbor and make a stop at Ephesus, and in all probability he had to follow the course of the ship.

He would stop for the night or for a few days where it stopped. Paul desired, if possible, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. While the ship stopped at Miletus he sent for the elders of Ephesus in order that he might have a final interview with them. Paul would allow no opportunity to pass either to proclaim the Gospel to those who had heard it or to strengthen the disciples who had already accepted it. He had walked the twenty miles across country from Troas to Assos in order that he might remain five or six hours longer and preach the remainder of the night at Troas. Now at Miletus he took advantage of an opportunity to see the elders of Ephesus, who might hasten over to meet him before his ship was ready to move onward.

In the passage before us Paul is bidding a life-long farewell to his Christian friends in pro-consular Asia. Though his face was set toward Jerusalem he was not going backward. He was possibly, with others, taking collections from the various churches to Jerusalem. His ultimate objective was to go far west into new and greater fields. He wanted to go to Rome and even beyond that to Spain, the western bounds of the explored world.

Paul's address to the Ephesian elders at this time presents a most pathetic yet triumphant scene. It is one of the most touching passages in the whole Word of God. Even at this remote date as one reads it his heart is softened and quite possibly his eyes are moistened. The fellowship between earnest Christian leaders is always close, but in this instance Paul was the spiritual father of most of these men. He was speaking with them and ministering to them for the last time on earth. Paul set before them plainly the fact that it was their last meeting in this world. He had taught them, entreated them, suffered, toiled, prayed and wept with them, that they might have an inheritance among them which are sanctified. They knew that he was a noble soul who was determined to go steadily forward though he was aware of the fact that he must suffer for it, perhaps give his life in the effort. The personal danger did not deter him for a moment. He counted not his life dear unto himself. His supreme aim was the honor of his Lord Jesus Christ. In this portion of the chapter Paul takes a look backward, then a look forward, then gives a parting charge to the elders and finally, bids them a last farewell as he commends them to God in prayer. Both the backward and the forward look of Paul in this passage show the manner in which he had surrendered his life to the service of Christ.

FAITHFULNESS IN THE PAST

That Paul's life was surrendered to God is shown by his faithfulness in the past. He was not ashamed to review the past in the presence of those who knew him intimately. What a grand thing it is to be able to review one's life without groans of remorse! To be able to say in truth, I have not shunned to declare the whole gospel; I am free from the blood of all men.

HIS DILIGENCE

After Paul reached Ephesus he had not lost a day. He said: "**And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons**" (Acts 20:18). He had taught both publicly and from house to house (20). He could call them to witness that he was free from the blood of all men (26).

For a period of three years he had ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears (31). During all that time he had worked with his own hands in order to minister to his own necessities and to those who were with him (34). He apparently help up his calloused hands to show them the signs of his toil. Besides all this he had written letters to other churches in order to direct, warn, encourage and strengthen them. There are many busy ministers and missionaries today, but there are few who have a record which will compare favorably with that of the apostle Paul.

FACED DIFFICULTIES

He had worked under great difficulties. He had served the Lord regardless of many tears and trials which befell him by reason of the plots of the Jews: **“Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews”** (Acts 20:19). He shrank not from declaring to them anything that was profitable (20). They drove him out of their synagogue. They called his miracles spurious and tried to imitate him. They charged him with ruining their business and tried to mob him. He permitted no difficulties to slacken his energy or to intimidate him in his testimony either in private or public. It requires great faith to continue on through a prolonged period in the face of bitter and organized opposition. Most men are not willing to face a fraction of the difficulties and trials which Paul faced. His is a perpetual example to all missionaries and ministers of Christ.

NOT FOR PERSONAL GAIN

Paul assured his friends: **“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me”** (Acts 20:33, 34). Many of God’s servants have denied themselves that they might serve Christ, but very few have gone wholly without salary, as Paul did, when they had the opportunity of receiving support if they would accept it.

A missionary asked a Burmese boatman if he were willing to preach the Gospel to his fellow-countrymen. The man was getting good pay as a boatman, but the missionary told him he would be able to pay him only two dollars a month or less than one fourth of what he was then earning. “How is it,” said the missionary, “will you go for what I have offered you?” It was hard for the man to decide. For some moments he sat pondering, then looked up and said: “I will not go for two dollars, but I will go for Christ.”

It was manifest to anyone who knew Paul that he did not go to Ephesus or to any other city to preach for an earthly reward, but he went that he might obey and honor his Lord Jesus Christ.

PREACHED A FULL GOSPEL

He could say at the close of his work in Asia, and this was practically the close of his work in freedom:

“And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20, 21). He had not shunned to declare to them the whole counsel of God (27). His letter to the Ephesians is evidence of the full Gospel which he had taught them. They would not have been capable of receiving and understanding such a letter if they had not been well instructed through a continued period of time until they had grasped the deeper truths of revelation and were able to partake of strong meat.

All the facts of his ministry furnish cumulative evidence that Paul’s life was surrendered to his Lord and Master. A man may look forward and make some great promises as to what he expects to do in the future and his promises may be but as chaff. But when his declaration of service for the future is backed by a record of complete consecration in the past, then his words are received with great weight.

Without any serious provocation men garble and withhold portions of the Gospel today. Some revise the doctrines of the Bible to suit their hearers; some subtract from them so as not to offend sinners, and some dress them up in gilded terms so as to please their audiences. Such missionaries or ministers are a menace to the Christian religion. They are blind, perhaps willfully blind, leaders of the blind. They are not imitators of Paul. They are wholly unworthy of the name of Christ.

ELDERS CALLED TO COMPLETE SURRENDER

Paul called the elders to surrender their lives to Christ. He first exhorted them to feed the church: **“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”** (Acts 20:28). They had been called not merely by man, but by the Holy Spirit. They should bear the burden of the responsibility of feeding the flock. Nothing could have been committed to their care which was of more value than the church because it had been purchased by the blood of Christ. The apostle evidently means, when he speaks of the blood of God, the blood of Jesus Christ who is God. To guard the flock from all encroaching enemies and thieves; to support the weak and be able to render a full account was, and is, an exceedingly great and important task. No elder ought to underestimate the grave duties of the office to which he has been called. His life should be surrendered to Christ and he should be willing to undertake the work of watching over God’s flock, the church, though the work be arduous and the problems many.

TO SET AN EXAMPLE

The elders were also called to set an example to the members of the church: **“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”** (Acts 20:35).

Paul had showed them by his example, as well as precepts, that they ought to support the weak and be more ready to give than to receive. They were to take heed to themselves first before they were ready to care for the flock. As Paul was exemplary in every respect so ought every elder, and also every member, to be. Every one, though in a humble position in life, is exercising an influence by his example, upon someone else. With this in mind we ought to be exceedingly careful how we walk. When we are strong and pure we help others, but when we fail and sin we tempt others.

TO EXERCISE DISCIPLINE

Paul exhorted the elders to exercise discipline in the church: **“I know,”** he said **“that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”** (Acts 20:29, 30). Paul’s prediction proved true, as we learn from the second chapter of Revelation. The patience of the elders was tried. They found it necessary to try those who said they were apostles and were not. They found that some who made such declarations were liars (Revelation 2:2).

Paul help up his own example, in this as in other matters, before the elders. They should earnestly warn and entreat the members, striving to keep them on the right path. He endeavored to impress upon them that the elders, as well as the minister, should be fully surrendered to God and they should endeavor to lead all members to surrender themselves wholly to Christ.

Discipline has never been popular in the church, it is not an easy matter to exercise it, yet it is necessary to the strength and life of the church. Because of the lack of it Israel drifted into sin, their leaders permitted idolatry and other sins, and as a result the people suffered captivity and the land desolation. Because of the lack of discipline almost all the churches which Paul founded decayed.

In various church courts when some important doctrine is being discussed which is being overlooked or perverted, or when some sin is under review which is becoming more popular, there are usually men who say, I am not interested, we ought to be talking about missions. They seem to forget that discipline must be exercised in missions, and that missions are necessary in some parts of the world where the Gospel once was strong but suffered disintegration because sin was allowed to enter in. When a man says, I believe in evangelism but I do not believe in discipline, did you ever pause to consider how superficial he is? What is evangelism? It is testifying against godlessness, atheism and infidelity, telling men that they are lost apart from Christ; telling men that there is salvation in and through Him. What is discipline? It is not primarily putting men out of the church. It is testifying against godlessness in the professed followers of Christ. It is testifying against some sin, possibly less than atheism, but nevertheless sin, trying to win the disciple back to his first love for Christ, to purity of life and earnestness of testimony. It is an effort to check sin in one life for the sake of the person who has sinned, and also that he may not contaminate the church and the community by continuing in sin.

In evangelism the minister or elder brings men the elemental facts of saving grace; in discipline he brings men to a fuller surrender to Christ or turns them from drifting from Christ.

Isaiah urged the people of God to lengthen the cords and strengthen the stakes. Both are important. Both are shown to be important in the history of the church. Both are increasingly important today. The extreme form of what is called “Modernism” is skepticism in the church. It is a great detriment to the church. There are churches where skeptical teaching is permitted which were once orthodox. How came the change? Not by one leap, but by slow degrees with the drift unchecked. When the law is not enforced in the state there is lawlessness and crime. When the law of God is not maintained in the church, the church will soon become impregnated with worldly practices and skeptical teaching. Paul realized the importance of discipline when he exhorted the church of old, and we would do well if we would take his advice seriously and practically today. Oh how Paul pleaded with the elders that they might make a full surrender of themselves to God! Then they would be fitted to teach, exhort and warn the members of the flock over which they were set as watchmen.

THE FORWARD LOOK OF A SURRENDERED LIFE

That Paul’s life was surrendered is shown by the brave front as he looked forward. Some men would have called it a very dark picture as they looked forward if they had been in Paul’s place. They would have felt depressed and down-hearted.

BONDS AWAITED HIM

He had evidence that bonds and afflictions awaited him: **“Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me”** (Acts 20:23). The Holy Spirit had witnessed to him in every city that these afflictions were before him. He probably did not know as definitely as he did a few days later when Agabus told him how his hands and feet would be bound at Jerusalem: **“And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul’s girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles”** (Acts 21:10, 11). He did not doubt the witness of the Spirit yet he was determined to go forward. His spirit was not bound and never could be bound, however strongly men might forge their chains and bind his body. Tradition has handed down an old saying that Jesus once turned to his disciples and said: “The nearer you are to me, the nearer you are to the fire.” Whether or not the tradition is true, the fact is true, for nearness to Jesus ever means nearness to the fire of persecution, temptation and difficulty. You may depend upon it that Jesus is not in the rear of the battle, but in the very thick of it. If you want to live near to Him you will be very near to the fire of the enemy. The world has every persecuted the earnest Christian, the Christ-like man.

PURPOSE UNCHANGED

Paul was not moved from his purpose: **“But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”** (Acts 20:24).

He did not hold his life dear to himself. Whatever might await him he would go on. His aim was Rome, and whether free or bound, he would try, to the utmost of his ability, to bear his message there.

The thought of missions bore heavily upon Paul's heart and then it took action in his life until he could say: "**forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus**" (Philippians 3:13-14). At Miletus, as ever, the cry was, forward, and nothing could turn him back.

A speaker of the Men's Missionary Congress at Chicago told of a certain Christian who said to a friend who was interested in missions: "The subject of missions is getting on my nerves!" The friend replied, "I am told there are two sets of nerves, sensory and motor; on which set of your nerves does this subject bear the harder?"

One day a bird tapped at the window of Mrs. Nansen's home at Christiania. Instantly the window was opened, and the wife of the famous arctic explorer in another moment covered the little messenger with kisses and caresses. The carrier pigeon had been away from the cottage for thirty months, but it had not forgotten the way home. It brought a note from Mr. Nansen saying that all was going well with him and his expedition in the polar regions. The explorer had fastened the message to the carrier pigeon and turned the bird loose. The frail courier darted out into the blizzard air. It flew like an arrow over a thousand miles of frozen waste, then over another thousand of ocean and plains and forests, until one morning it entered the window of the waiting mistress and delivered the message which she had been awaiting so anxiously. The bird makes one think of Paul. We are filled with amazement at his faith, sagacity and endurance. How could a little carrier pigeon accomplish a feat so wonderful? After an absence of thirty months how could it keep on a course so true that it would reach its goal two thousand miles away? Paul after twenty years of toil and struggle had his face set as truly as ever towards the goal that he had set before him from the beginning, the world for Christ.

COUNTED NOT HIS LIFE DEAR

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). He did not count his life his own. To him to live was Christ, to die was counted gain. What truer evidence of surrender can we have than that? Bonds, afflictions, even threatened death would not cause him to change his course. It was the greatest privilege and joy for him to carry on the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify of the Gospel of the grace of God.

When a man says he does not count his life dear to himself men often demand proof. Many a man has boasted before the battle who has been found behind the lines when the battle is raging. Paul had proved that there was no boasting about his assertions of surrender to Christ, for he had been in peril of robbers, in peril of the sea, in peril of his own countrymen, in the mob and in prison, and he never quailed in the presence of an enemy or threatened death.

Always he was ready to go forward and preach the Gospel in the next city, to face the mob again if need be, that he might move men to realize that Christ was calling them to repent and believe. Follow Paul over his pathway as missionary from Damascus, Jerusalem, Paphos, Antioch, Lystra, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth and Ephesus, and you will see at every turn that there is abundant evidence to substantiate his declaration of willingness to die for Christ.

A converted Hindoo was persecuted bitterly for accepting Christ. His relatives seemed filled with deadly hate against him for forsaking the religion of his ancestors and did what they could to force him to deny Christ. Some sympathetic friends asked him how it was possible for him to bear so much trouble. He replied: "Ask me rather how it is possible for me to bear all the joy that I have in the service and fellowship of Christ." That was the case with Paul. When confronted with bonds and dangers he did not speak of finishing his course with sorrow, but with joy.

Some may think, who are just beginning their life's work for Christ, that it is most important that they avoid danger in order that they may have an opportunity to testify for Christ. They may say, Paul was getting old; he had been out on three missionary journeys and had done a wonderful work for Christ, therefore he need not worry if his life and work should be cut off. God wants the same consecration and surrendered life from the young missionary or servant, wherever he may be, and if his life is taken away God can use it, brief as it may be, to glorify Himself.

The name of Harriet Newell has shone in the annals of modern missionary history. At the early age of eighteen she went with her husband as a missionary to India. It was much harder to go then as a pioneer than it is to go today. They arrived on the heathen coast only to remain a few weeks and then to be sent away. With heavy hearts they put to sea again. The young wife was stricken with fever and died. Thus in one year this Christian woman became missionary, wife, mother, and martyr. She seemed to accomplish nothing. She merely sailed away over the sea with a great love in her heart, to be exiled, to die, and to find a grave among strangers. She taught no heathen woman; she told the story of redemption to no benighted soul. But was that lovely young life wasted? By no means! During all the past century her name has been one of the strongest inspirations to missionary work. The story of her consecration has kindled in many other women's hearts the flames of love, sending them to carry the love of Christ to dark, sinful lands. She being dead yet speaketh.

Among the heroes of recent years there comes the challenge from Miss F. Elma French, missionary in Mersina. She writes to the Foreign Board in words that ring like those of the great apostle. In reply to the request, that for her own safety, she should leave for Latakia where other missionaries were stationed, she replies: "I have always contended that we are never so safe as in the place where God places us. I have promised those suffering, struggling, heartbroken Christians that I will return. And how can I ever look the world in the face if I turn my back on them?" And as she speaks of a native Christian of Messina who has risked all in the interest of the work, she continues: "I do not consider that my life is in anything like the danger his is in, and yet he is willing to risk all since hearing that I am expected to return. He and others have said, 'we will stand by Miss French.' Now am I compelled to turn my back on these? I have no fear of losing my life, but if such should be God's will I am ready to lay it down for Him who died for me. To me death is preferable to cowardice . . .

One of my friends made the remark that if I sent back and became ill the Board and the whole church would blame the missionaries. I am entirely responsible for the step I am taking, and no blame rests on either the Board or the missionaries, as I have made my own choice. My life is in God's hand. He has called and I am simply answering."

WOULD SEE HIS FACE NO MORE

Paul told the elders of Ephesus that they would see his face no more: "**And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more**" (Acts 20:25). When it came to parting, "**they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more**" (Acts 20:37, 38). Paul loved his friends and it was not easy for him to part from them. But he loved his Saviour and like Him loved a lost world, and was willing to lay down his life that he might win some to Christ. The world of glory was always so near to Paul that it would be only a short step from this world to the next. When he faced it more closely than he did at this time he was just as firm and resolute. When he was ready to be offered and the time of his departure was at hand, he believed that it had been a good fight and that he would receive a crown of righteousness. Who can count the number of the men and the women who have been enthused by Paul since that day?

"When I was in college," said Henry Haigh, "a couple of men were sent out to West Africa to fill a vacancy. And before they had gone three months there came a cable telling us that one was dead. In less than another month a second cable came, telling us that the second was dead. At once that matter was announced to the students of our college, and the question was asked, 'Who would take their places where two had gone and died?' Six men at once stood forth and offered to go in their places, and two men were sent. In less than six months these two men were dead, and a cable came again and the question was asked, 'Who will go?' On that occasion - I shall never forget it, it stands out as one of the thrilling moments of my life - when the announcement was made at the college table and the question was asked, 'Who will go?' every man in that college stood up and said, 'Send me'."

Does not someone who reads the message of the great apostle hear the Spirit calling? Are you not ready to respond, "Send me!"

PARTING PRAYER SHOWS SURRENDERED LIFE

That Paul's life was surrendered is shown by his prayer and parting. Paul had just showed the elders how he had worked for them and had neither asked nor expected an earthly reward, but had labored with his own hands. He had said that they ought to show a like consecration, "**I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all**" (Acts 20:35, 36).

They wept sore, kissed him, embraced him and accompanied him to the ship. If there was ever a prayer that those Ephesian elders would remember, surely it would be that parting prayer of Paul, knowing that it was the last time that he would ever pray with them on earth. He commended them to God and to the Word of His grace which was able to build them up and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified. There is nothing that draws men more closely together and to their God than prayer. When prayer is offered by a godly man under peculiarly touching circumstances it makes a greater impression upon all who are present.

At the beginning of the last century a young man by the name of Samuel Mills felt the call to go as a missionary. When he told his father he refused to give his consent to let him go. As neither would give up they called a council of a few godly men to pray over it. The one who led in prayer was a plain blunt man, and this was his prayer: "Almighty God, thou knowest that thy servant Mills consecrated this boy to thy service in his youth, and now that the boy wants to preach the Gospel to the heathen, thy servant Mills is mad. Amen." When they got up from their knees Mr. Mills said, "he can go." He could not face God with a refusal to surrender his son, though he was the dearest to him in life.

In his autobiography Thomas Guthrie says of his mother, that to her prayers, her piety and her precepts, he undoubtedly owed more than to any other human influence. He speaks of "that eventful morning when we first left a father's house; and, as the gates of that happy sanctuary slowly opened for our departure, amid tears and many a kind farewell, watched by a father's anxious eye and followed by a mother's prayers, we pushed out our bark on the swell of life's treacherous sea. That day the turning point of many a young man's history, the crisis of his destiny - may have exerted an influence as permanent of our fate as its impression remains indelible on our memory."

When William Colgate was leaving home, a lad of sixteen to go out into the world to seek his fortune, as he trudged along the road he met an old man, a captain of a canal boat. "Well William," said the old man, "where are you going?" "I don't know," he answered, "I must make a living for myself." "There is no trouble about that," said the captain, "be sure to start right and you will get along finely." William told the old man that the only trade he knew anything about was soap and candle making. "Well," said the old man, "let me pray with you once more and give you a little advice and then I will let you go." They kneeled down on the tow-path and prayed, and then the old captain gave him this advice. "Some one will soon be the leading soap-maker of New York. It can be you as well as any one. I hope it may be. Be a good man; give your heart to Christ; give the Lord all that belongs to him of every dollar you earn; make an honest soap; give a full pound; and I am certain you will yet be a prosperous and rich man." He was led to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and united with the church. The first dollar he earned brought up the question of the Lord's part. In the Bible he found that the Jews were commanded to give one-tenth. So he said, "If the Lord will take one-tenth I will give that." And so he did; ten cents of every dollar were sacred to the Lord. He engaged in the soap business, make an honest soap, gave a full pound and instructed his bookkeeper to open an account with the Lord, and carry one-tenth of all his income to that account. He prospered and grew rich faster than he had ever hoped. He then gave the Lord two-tenths and prospered more than ever. Then he gave three-tenths, then four-tenths, then five-tenths.

He gave millions of dollars to the Lord's cause. But for that parting prayer and the timely and faithful advice of the old captain the name of William Colgate would probably be unknown today. As it is he left a name that will not die.

Like the prayer of Paul, the prayer of every godly father and mother, the prayers of saintly elders, and the prayers of earnest pastors will remain and strengthen many a boy and girl as they go out into life to face the struggles of the world. Many a time they will be kept from falling as they remember how they have been commended to God and how they vowed to Him that they would be true to their Lord and Master.

When all other things are fading from view and when at last we near the shore of the next world and know that the hour is short until we part to be with God, what a comfort it will be to have some godly saint commend our souls to God, perhaps in the very words of Paul: "**And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified**" (Acts 20:32).

When General Grant was on his death bed, the Christian soldier, General Howard, was with him. When Grant's end drew near and his throat was muffled that he could not speak clearly, General Howard began to tell him of his great record and how the country would not forget him. Grant's muffled voice interrupted him, and turning he said, "Howard, tell me more about prayer." We may but poorly imagine how the old Christian General was moved as he commended the soul of his friend to God in that last parting hour.

May we always remember, like Paul, to commend our own souls and those of our dear ones and brethren in the Lord, to His Almighty care and keeping. As in the case of Paul and the Ephesian elders, tears may sometimes dim our eyes, but Oh! how much better it is to have our eyes dimmed with tears than to have our hearts remain cold with neglect and sin!

QUESTIONS **(Acts 20:17-28)**

1. From what seaport did Paul call for the elders of Ephesus?
2. What lesson do we learn from the manner in which Paul took advantage of this and other brief opportunities?
3. Tell something of Paul's faithfulness at Ephesus?
4. What were some of the evidences of his diligence?
5. What were some of the difficulties which he faced?
6. What remuneration did he receive for his work?
7. Show that Paul preached a full Gospel?
8. Was it easier then or now to preach a full Gospel?
9. Why then do many ministers withhold a part of the Gospel today?
10. Who did Paul tell the elders to take heed concerning first? Who next?
11. Who had placed them as overseers of the flock?
12. To whom then do elders have to give an account?
13. What did Paul say concerning the exercise of discipline?
14. What follows when there is no discipline in a church to keep it pure?

15. Is the drift in the church usually very rapid at first?
16. What then should be the attitude of the officers toward the earliest decline?
17. What did Paul do after speaking to the elders?
18. Why was the parting so sad?
19. How did they show their love for Paul?
20. Did Paul's example agree with his words when he said he counted not his life dear? Does ours?

~ end of chapter 36 ~

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