

Sermon No. 415

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH

The book of Acts

CHAPTER 20

Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-40

WHICH IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF ALL?

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ACTS 19

Third missionary journey

- Paul at Ephesus two years
- The Holy Spirit was working through Paul
 - Exalting GOD
 - Exhorting Grow in Christ
 - Emphasizing The ministry of the Holy Spirit
 - Encouraging Confess sin
 - Confronting The enemy

The result: Word of GOD . . . 19:20 . . . **grew mightily and prevailed**

NLT 20 So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect

Message: we must be willing . . .

- To confirm our faith in Jesus
- To confess our sins
- To confront the enemy

WHEN THE THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY COMES TO AN END

The third missionary journey is coming to an end

- Leaves Ephesus . . . journeys through Macedonia & Greece
- Faces strong opposition . . . seeks to return to Israel
- Makes a final visit to Troas . . . delivers a lengthy message
- Travels to Miletus . . . farewells the elders from Ephesus
- Exhorts them to follow his example

FOCUS: what would our farewell speech be?

Acts 20:1-16

¹ After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to *himself*, embraced *them*, and departed to go to Macedonia. ² Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece ³ and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ And 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. ⁵ These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. ⁶ 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.

Ministering at Troas

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. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. ⁹ And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, “Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him.” ¹¹ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed. ¹² And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted

NLT ¹² . . . and everyone was greatly relieved

From Troas to Miletus

¹³ Then we 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. ¹⁴ And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church

Here the farewell speech begins

Acts 20:18-21 – the first thing he does is recount his ministry

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, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰ how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. GOD has shown me – that we must serve the LORD with HUMILITY

- There will be tears and trials . . . but we won't be dwelling on that

2. GOD has shown me – concerning the Word, not to keep anything back

- Unashamedly I taught the entire Word of GOD . . . I held nothing back
- I didn't teach topics that pleased me or my audience . . . I proclaimed it all

3. GOD has shown me – not to limit our message to one audience

- Be ready to share with everyone . . . we don't get to pick and choose
- And we have to be ready to share wherever they are

Acts 20:22-24 – the second thing he does is speak of his future

²² And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. 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.

4. GOD has shown me – suffering lies ahead . . . but that won't move me!

WHY . . . because my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God

I count my love for GOD more dear to me than my own life!

Psalm 16:8 . . . I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved

5. GOD has shown me – I must finish my race!

- Paul likens himself as . . . a runner who had a race to finish
- Paul speaks of my race . . . that implies we each have our own race
- This is the race of faith . . . Hebrews 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

6. GOD has shown me – I must serve Him continually with joy!

- Jesus said, in the Gospel of John, that He wants our joy to be full

Romans 14:17

¹⁷ for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

Acts 20:25-27 – the third thing he does is makes a solemn declaration of his innocence before God

²⁵ “And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

7. GOD has shown me the importance of having clear conscience – that comes from faithfully teaching the **whole counsel of GOD!**

- We know the importance GOD places on us allowing the Bible speak for itself

- We know that isn't what people want . . . 2 Timothy 4:3
³ For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear
- Preachers who fail to declare the whole counsel are guilty of the blood of men
- Paul wasn't going to let that be on his conscience
- For two years he rented a room from *the school of Tyrannus and taught the Word of GOD* several hours a day six days a week . . . 1,500 to 2,000 hours!

Acts 20:28-31 – the fourth thing he does is charges them to guard themselves and God's people

²⁸ Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears

8. GOD has shown me – that the church doesn't belong to me

- Jesus Christ purchased the church . . . with His own blood
- Yes, he must pay attention to GOD's people
- He must love them, care for them, feed them, protect them
- But he does it because the Holy Spirit has made him an overseer

The sheep need to remember that God appointed shepherds to feed them

The shepherds need to remember that the flock belongs to God, and not them

9. GOD has shown me – that as a leader among God's people I have to do more than feed and lead – I also have to protect

Danger comes as much from within as it does from outside

- It is often easier for pastors to deal with the wolves!
- The enemy on the inside aims to draw the disciples after themselves!
Pastors are too often building their own kingdom . . . instead of GOD's Kingdom
- Ego can make people do things that they *never* thought they would do

Paul says, if you want to evaluate my love for you, consider this . . .

Remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears

Acts 20:32-35 – the fifth thing he does is to commend them to have a sincere and genuine heart of sacrifice for the LORD

³² "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. ³³ I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ 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.'"

10. GOD has shown me – that GOD's Grace is sufficient for all our needs

- Despite all Paul could give them . . . only GOD's grace would see them through

11. GOD has shown me – that you cannot be in this for yourself

- It is all about what we can give . . . not what we can get out of it
- There cannot be an effective ministry without a genuine heart of *sacrifice*
- It has to be a *glad sacrifice*

Finally, Paul shows them how much he loves them – Acts 20:36-38

- Some people think Paul was cold

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, ³⁸ 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.

Paul's exhortation to the church leaders is amazing

- As a servant of the LORD he set an AMAZING example
- Not as an example *instead* of Jesus . . . but as a follower *of* Jesus

1 Corinthians 11:1 **Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ**

- We can each benefit from his example

But the heart of the Matter is this . . . despite Paul's teaching – it ultimately comes down to how willing they are PERSONALLY to CONTINUE to put CHRIST first

- Remarkably . . . 30 to 40 years later, Jesus sent a letter to this same church

Revelation 2:1-7

¹ "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

² "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. ³ You have patiently suffered for Me without quitting.

What a compliment . . . *and* a testimony to Paul's teaching

⁴ "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! ⁵ Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. ⁶ But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

⁷ "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.

- It may well be that in their zeal to fight against false doctrine – which they seemed to do well – they left their love for Jesus and their love for one another behind

That is a great illustration of the principle that the devil doesn't care which side of the boat we fall out of!

- Church can be about pleasing other
- Church can be ticking off boxes

Be careful not to lose your first love

Don't get so caught up in . . .

- Yourself
- Standards you have set for everyone else
- In taking the moral high ground
- Trying to solve mankind's problems
- Being the Guardian of the Universe

That you lose your first love – Mary and Martha syndrome

Paul's conscience is clear

It is the people that have become cold toward their LORD

Consider always that everything is about the LORD Jesus Christ

Concerning the Word of GOD, we must not keep anything back – in that respect we must have a clear conscience

We must warn and protect against false doctrine

We must not limit our message to one audience

We must not allow suffering and trials to move us

GOD's Grace is sufficient for all our needs

We must be prepared as Paul was to finish the race – with joy

We must serve the LORD with HUMILITY

But ultimately

We must remember that the church doesn't belong us

That is why we cannot be in it for ourselves

IT IS ALL ABOUT JESUS