

## Acts 20:17-38 (#34) 1.10.2021 (21003)

### Focus

In a chaotic world filled with competing voices and pressures, the difficult thing is to remain focused.

One of the supreme virtues of walking with the Lord is a sense of focus in life. Jesus taught his friends about this.

### Luke 10:41-42.

Paul demonstrates great focus in Acts 20 ...

#### I. Background

- A. Third Missionary Journey, Early Spring, probably around 58 AD
- B. Paul is on his way to Jerusalem (hopefully by Pentecost in late May)
  - 1. Just finished 4 years of fruitful ministry in Ephesus, then Macedonia and Achaia (Corinth for the Winter).
  - 2. Just wrote Romans (in Corinth)
  - 3. He's traveling with a group of men representatives from the churches of Macedonia.
  - 4. He's got a large offering, collected from the Gentile churches for the famished Christians at Jerusalem.
  - 5. He has not stopped in Ephesus, because he wants to get to Jerusalem by Pentecost (late May).
- C. He has called the Elders from Miletus... 36 miles S. of Ephesus.

#### II. Paul's last talk with his Ephesian leaders. Acts 20:17-38

- A. I lived among you, serving the Lord. 17-21
  - 1. By staying through the stress. 19
    - a) Humility, tears and trials through the plots of the Jews.
    - b) *Note the stress of representing the gospel in a pagan culture.*
  - 2. By communicating what is spiritually profitable: the implications and applications of the gospel. 20-21
    - a) Declaring, Teaching, Testifying to everybody who would listen.
    - b) Communicating the gospel and its wisdom.
      - (1) Repentance toward God.
        - (a) Turning from evil at every level.
      - (2) Faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ.
        - (a) Jesus is the Messiah who saves us by sheer grace. Full person and work of Jesus Christ
    - c) The whole counsel of God. 27
  - 3. *Note the importance of teaching, thinking and responding practically (35)*
- B. Now I'm going to Jerusalem. 22-24
  - 1. The Spirit is compelling me forward, to Jerusalem.
    - a) And I don't know exactly what will happen...
    - b) Except I know it will be hard...
  - 2. My personal life is not the most important thing to me. 24
    - a) *Finishing my course is...*
  - 3. The gospel of the grace of God is more important than I am.
    - a) *I must bear witness of it.*
  - 4. I won't see you again. 25
- C. So, keep your head in the game (elders, pastors). 25-30
  - 1. Pay close attention to yourselves and the flock
  - 2. God bought these sheep with his own blood! 28
  - 3. Watch out for false leaders and twisted teachings. Rom.16:17-18

D. And follow my example. 31-35

1. I offered admonition all the time. 31
  - a) Noutheto = from “nous” mind, put into someone’s mind = warn, instruct, teach, correct, keeping people on the right track.
  - b) With tears = seriously
2. I focused you on God and His Word. 32
  - a) The gospel, able to build you up.
3. I wasn’t after your money or your stuff. 33-34
4. I showed that ministry is hard work on behalf of the weak. 35
5. This is thinking like Jesus. *It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

E. Let’s pray together one more time. 36-38

1. Radically committed to the importance of prayer and love toward each other.

**III. Four Questions that help us focus in a fallen world.**

**A. Why would Paul be tempted to “shrink from” giving what is profitable (for faith). 19-21**

1. *Because repentance toward God and faith in Jesus the Messiah are profoundly controversial.*
  - a) The incarnation, atonement, resurrection, ascension. If these things are true, humanity is utterly lost.
2. *Because what is profitable for walking with God in Christ is a threat to all idolatry (religions and philosophies that are grounded in paganism/atheism). If the gospel is true, the other religions and philosophies are not. People do not want to know this.*

**B. Why would Paul say that he was “innocent of the blood of all of them?” 26**

1. *Because the gospel is a life-or-death issue. Blood? Matt.10:28*
  - a) Heaven and hell are real. Judgment is real. Even forgiven Christians will stand before the Lord. 2 Cor.5:10
2. *Because having communicated it to the best of his ability, his job was essentially done.*
  - a) It is not our job to actually regenerate people. The Lord does that through the gospel (Rom.1:16-17).
  - b) Our job is to pray and communicate the true gospel to people.

**C. How could Paul leave these people in danger, confidently? 32**

1. *He trusted God with them.*
  - a) Can we trust God with all the 7 billion human souls on earth? How about our loved ones?
2. *He trusted the gospel in them.*
  - a) The Word of His Grace = the whole message of the gospel, ever more deeply understood.
    - (1) Read Romans and the Pauline epistles
  - b) Build you up. Greek = construct, like building a house.
    - (1) Give you the inheritance among those sanctified (set apart to God)
  - c) Continued understanding of this gospel word from God strengthens our minds.
  - d) The whole Bible as it points to Christ.
3. *Which is why when we gather, the topic is God, Christ, the gospel and how to live in a fallen world with a risen mindset (Col.3:1-4).*
  - a) *Because we need to be built up in our knowledge of God.*

**D. Why would Paul feel constrained by the Spirit to risk going to Jerusalem? 22-24**

1. *Because he had a purpose in life that transcends this life—God, and the gospel of His Grace.*
  - a) Running his course for the Lord, not counting his earthly life as the most important thing. *This is almost the opposite of our current postmodern view of life. But it is what gave an eternal and Real focus to Paul, taught to him by Jesus.*

**IV. We simply must have a purpose for life that transcends death.**

- A. God’s grace is what we need more than a new society...
- B. Because God’s kingdom is the only eternal kingdom (Isa.9:6-7)
- C. And God’s Son is the only way into that reality. Jn.14:6