

"The Third Missionary Journey"

Part 13

Acts 18:23-21:26

Introduction: Last week in our study we were looking at Paul's warning to the elders at Ephesus. This would be the last time they would see him on earth and he was very concerned about the church that he had planted at Ephesus.

Notice Acts 20:27-29

Paul knew that after his departure the enemy would send in false teachers in an attempt to lead the church into apostasy and this is exactly what had happened. Notice some history on what happened.

"The first false teaching about Jesus in the days of the early church did not deny that He was God, but it denied that He was really human and said He only seemed to be human. The heresy was called Docetism, coming from the ancient Greek word "to seem," and was taught by Cerinthus, who opposed the apostle John in the city of Ephesus."

John addressed this false teaching in 1 John.

1 John 4:1-3

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

² *Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:*

³ *And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

Paul knew how Satan worked and he knew that the church would be attacked therefore he gave these departing words to warn the elders at Ephesus.

➤ Time with the Elders

Notice Acts 20:31

Here in verse 31 Paul commands these elders to watch. This has the idea of being alert at all times.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8

⁵ *Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.*

⁶ *Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*

⁷ *For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.*

⁸ *But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.*

1 Peter 4:7

⁷ *But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.*

There is a need to be on alert for false teaching to come into the church. If we remember correctly there is some kind of movement every so often that comes around and many believers jump on the bus rather quickly. Here are some we have seen.

1. **Promise Keepers**
2. **Prayer of Jabez.**
3. **Purpose Driven Church.**
4. **The Blood Moons.**

It should not surprise us that something else comes around sometime soon.

These elders were also commanded to REMEMBER. We are creatures that forget very quickly and so it is good for us to be reminded over and over again of the Truth of God's Word.

2 Peter 1:

¹² Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

¹³ Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance:

¹⁴ Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

Notice Acts 20:32

Here again in this verse we are reminded of how important the Word of God is in the life of the believer. Paul tells these elders that the Word of God was able to build them up. Notice what Jeremiah wrote.

Jeremiah 23:29

²⁹ Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

Jeremiah tells us that God's Word is like a fire. When we are constantly exposed to the Word it can "burn" the dross from our lives. It is like a hammer in that it can break the power of sin. Notice the words of Warren Wiersbe.

"God's Word is a tool for building. "'Is not my word like fire,' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'" (Jer 23:29). Sometimes God's Word has to break down before it can build up. Sometimes God's Word has to burn before it can warm. But God's Word is like a hammer—it is a tool for breaking down the old life and building up the new life. It enables us to build the church...(Acts 20:32). If you want to build your life, you must use tools, and the greatest tool of all is the Word of God. The better you understand the meaning of key Bible words, the more tools you will have in your "spiritual workshop" for building your own Christian life and helping to build the church."

Notice the words of Arnold.

"Elders must direct their own lives by the Bible; they must direct the local church by the Bible; and they must direct the lives of other Christians by the Bible, not on personal opinion, whim or logic. Only the Bible can build the saints and cause them to understand the inheritance they have in Christ with all the saints who are set apart to God. Paul wanted the elders to understand what he and all the prophets of old understood about the power of the Word. Jeremiah writes "'Is not My word like fire?" declares the LORD, "and like a hammer which shatters a rock?"

Notice Acts 20:26 again.

Now we are about to see the second thing that these elders could testify of. The first was that Paul was faithful in teaching the Word of God.

Notice Acts 20:33

Here is the second. These elders could testify that Paul did not come to Ephesus and serve the Lord to get money from the wealthy. Paul did not covet what others had. He was content with what the Lord gave him.

Philippians 4:10-13

¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Application:

Let us learn to be content because covetousness leads to idolatry. Let us be like the writer of Proverbs 30.

Proverbs 30:7-9

⁷ *Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die:*

⁸ *Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me:*

⁹ *Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Notice the words of Thomas Watson.

"A man may be said to be given to covetousness when he takes more pains for getting earth than for getting heaven. Covetousness is not only in getting riches unjustly, but in loving them inordinately, which is a key that opens the door to all sin.... There is no better antidote against coveting than which is another's than being content with that which is our own."

Colossians 3:1-3

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

² *Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.*

³ *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.*

Notice Acts 20:34-35

Paul labored with his hands for his needs and the needs of those who were with him. Somone has that we should examine the manner in which we seek material things; the degree to which we enjoy them; and, the manner in which we mourn or are anxious when we lose them. Givers are blessed because they are freed from this sin that brings both temporal and eternal destruction.

Notice Acts 20:35 again.

In this verse we can see that not only did Paul preach the Truth of God's Word but he also lived it. He lived in a manner that others could see the power of the Gospel in him.

Application:

There are many people who will not listen to what we might say but they will watch our lives. Therefore, we are to live in a way that the power of the Gospel is seen in our lives.

2 Corinthians 3:1-3

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

² *Ye are our epistle* written in our hearts, *known and read of all men:*

³ *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

Paul lived the Gospel in many ways and in Ephesus it was by giving to the needs of others.

Conclusion:

Notice Acts 20:36-38

It was only natural that they would grieve. Their relationship with Paul was very close. But the separation would not be permanent. They would one day see Paul again.

Application:

Let us remember that our relationships here will one day end but we will see each other again.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ *But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*

¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

¹⁷ Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.