

PANDEMIC "INFECTIOUS FAITH" ACTS 20:13-38

This Week's Core Competency

Giving Away My Faith – I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes. Ephesians 6:19, 20 *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

In his final address to the Ephesian elders, Paul referred to an unfinished task. Facing untold hardships that awaited him in Jerusalem, he told them, "I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (Ac 20:24). The task given to Paul is the same task given to his partners in ministry in Ephesus and to us, the task of making disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). The task has grown over the past two thousand years and still remains uncompleted.

Pastor David Daniels refers to the task expressed in the Great Commission as "unreached but not unreachable." He writes:

"Unfortunately, though this is God's Great Commission, there are still many people who have yet to hear the Gospel of Jesus. The 'nations' or 'peoples' in the Bible refer to the unique people groups scattered across the world. At Babel,

Make your life a mission—not an intermission.

– Arnold Glasgow

languages were confused because of the sinful pride of people (Genesis 11:1-9), and since then, about 13,000 unique ethno-linguistic groups have emerged. In the last 2000 years, approximately 70% of those groups have been 'reached' with the Gospel. That is, at least 2% of their population is Christian—a viable witness able to evangelize their own people.

"This means that 30% of the world's population—4000 people groups or about 3 billion people—is 'unreached.' They have never heard the Gospel of Jesus and there are no missionaries or churches among them. The great majority of these unreached people (95%) live in the 10/40 Window, the region between 10° and 40° north of the equator. This includes much of China, India, the Middle East and North Africa—people such as the 357,000 Kanuri/Yerwa people in South Sudan, the 132,000 Darzada people in Pakistan, the 3800 Madasi Kuruva people in India and the 200 Samre people in Cambodia.

"Imagine so many people, not people who have rejected Jesus, but who have not even heard His name! These people represent the church's present mission in the world. In Romans 10:14-15, Paul asks, 'How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?' For all the nations to hear, the church must go to them.

However, though the need is urgent, many churches continue to focus much of their mission on those who have already been reached with the Gospel. For example, in the United States, 95 cents

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of every dollar collected for ministry stays in the country. Four and one-half cents is directed to missionary efforts around the world, but this money is directed to those who have already been reached. Only one-half of one cent is directed to reaching unreached people.

"Among all churches in the world, only 10% of missionary efforts are directed to unreached people. Of the 430,000 missionaries around the world, only 2-3% of them are ministering among unreached people, and 40% of the global church's work is taking place within 10 of the most oversaturated countries on the planet. In 100 AD, there were 12 unreached people groups for each young congregation. But, today, there are 1,000 congregations worldwide for each unreached group. It is quite possible to go BEYOND and finish the task." (*Next Step Discipleship*, 155-56).

day **1** ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Acts 20:13-38

13 We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. 14 When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. 15 The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Kios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. 16 Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. 18 When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. 19 I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. 20 You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. 21 I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

22 "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. 23 I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. 24 However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

25 "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. 26 Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. 28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. 34 You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. 35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

36 When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. 37 They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. 38 What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "we" in v. 13.
- * Bracket the place names e.g., "Assos," "Mitylene," etc., throughout.
- * Circle the pronouns "we" and "us" in vv. 13-16.
- * Put parentheses around "day of Pentecost" in v. 16.
- * Circle the pronoun "I" in vv. 18-35.
- * Underline v. 24.
- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 26, "for" indicating *reason* in v. 27, and "so" indicating *result* in v. 31.
- * Highlight "keep watch," "be shepherds," "be on your guard" in vv. 28, 31.
- * Bracket "word of his grace" in v. 32.
- * Underline "build up" and "give inheritance" in v. 32.
- * Circle "must" in v. 35.

day 2 EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders rather than go there himself. Why?
2. The NIV divides Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders into four paragraphs (vv. 17-21, 22-24, 25-31, and 32-36). Give each one a title that reflects its contents.
3. Paul spends the first two paragraphs and verses 25-27 in the third as well as verses 33-35 in the fourth talking about himself. Why?
4. Put what Paul declared to Jews and Greeks in your own words.
5. Do you think Jesus has given us the same task that he had given Paul? Explain.
6. Explain what "of God's grace" means in the expression "the gospel of *God's grace*."
7. Put the responsibility of elders in your own words based on verses 28-31.
8. Whose church is it anyhow and why?
9. Verses 33-35 belong better in the first paragraph—don't they? What have they got to do with the paragraph they're in?
10. **Discussion:** What do you infer from verses 36-38?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Acts 20:17-35 contains the message Paul delivered to the elders of the church at Ephesus during a stopover in Miletus on his way to Jerusalem to end his third missionary journey. He sent for the elders because he didn't want to take the time to go to Ephesus himself, seeing that he wanted to reach Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost. He had just a month or so to complete his 610-mile voyage and knew, given his ties to people in the church and in the community, that visiting there would undermine his plans. His words are reminiscent of Jesus' last words to the disciples. One commentator observes: "In his journey to Jerusalem and Rome, Paul mirrors Jesus's journey to Jerusalem and the way he prepared the disciples for his absence in Luke 9-19. Paul likewise is preparing the churches for his absence. What he says to the community of Ephesus could be said to any of the communities to which he has a ministry. Indeed, this is how the passage functions in Acts. It tells churches how to carry on now that they will minister without figures such as Paul present" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 623).

Putting Paul's address in its context in the book of Acts, another commentator writes: "Paul's address to the Ephesian elders is the third and final example in Acts of his speeches during the course of his missionary work. The first, delivered in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (13:16-41), was given during the course of his first mission and was to a Jewish audience. The second, delivered before the Athenian Areopagus (17:22-31), was given during his second mission and was to a Gentile audience. The Miletus address was delivered in the course of his third mission and was given before a Christian gathering" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 422).

Paul sent for the elders because he wanted to see them for the last time and exhort them to do the work God had given them to do, just as he had done and was doing the work God had given him to do. The message is divided into four paragraphs in the NIV. In the first one (vv. 18-21) he recounted his past ministry at Ephesus—how he served the Lord with "great humility and tears," how he persevered in the face of Jewish opposition, and how he faithfully declared the truth to Jews and Greeks alike. He wasn't bragging; he was

giving them an example to follow. "Commentators sometimes remark that Paul appears to have been on the defensive in his Miletus address. Such was not the case. Paul was not defending his ministry. He was presenting it as an example for the Ephesian leaders to emulate. It is a worthy example for every servant of the Lord: a ministry marked by humility, openness, and inclusiveness and rooted in the gospel" (425).

In the second one (vv. 22-24), he revealed his present plans to visit Jerusalem. He confessed he didn't know what would ultimately happen there, but he knew "prison and hardships" lay in store. He didn't have a martyr complex; he was determined to complete the task the Lord had given him regardless of the cost. Paul knew "*the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.*" Listen to his words, "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace" (v. 24). Somewhat ironically, all the while following the direction of the Spirit, Paul was being warned by the Spirit. But that doesn't mean that the Spirit was sending the apostle a mixed message. The Spirit's warnings simply prepared Paul for what awaited him in Jerusalem and assured him that whatever happened, God was in it. Again, the apostle was giving leaders an example to follow.

In the third one (vv. 25-31), he told them what would no doubt happen in the future to himself and to them. He didn't expect to see them again (apparently he did return to the area later, as the Pastoral Epistles indicate, but at the time he did not consider a return likely), so he challenged them to "keep watch" over themselves and the church, to "be shepherds" of God's church, and to "be on guard" for those who would ravage the flock. Just as he hadn't stopped warning them day and night for three years, so also they shouldn't stop guarding the flock.

Finally, in the last paragraph (vv. 32-35), he blessed them and for all intents and purposes said, "Don't do it for the money." After all Jesus himself, said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Avarice among church leaders, as well as Christians in general, has always been a problem; it was then

as in the Pastorals where Paul insists that church leaders should be free from the love of money (1Ti 3:3-8; Tit 1:7, 11). And in all likelihood, it will always be a problem. Some things never change.

Paul addressed the Ephesians as *partners* in ministry. Consequently, he served as an example not only to elders *then* but to elders *now* also.

What's more, his words to elders *then* apply to elders *now* also. Furthermore, his example and words apply to Christian leaders of all kinds, and not only to all leaders but to all Christians as well. All are challenged by his exhortation and his single-minded devotion to the task God gave him and his perseverance in face of hardships.

The Message of the Passage

Follow Paul's example of single-minded devotion to your mission as a Christian and to your ministry as a leader.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 13 **We** Cf., 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16. Use of the 1st person pl. pronoun in these sections indicates that Luke is present. One author writes on Acts 20:5, 13, "Here the 'we' section resumes. They are in Troas for a week. This site is located along the rugged eastern Aegean coast about 150 miles north and slightly west of Ephesus. The writer of the 'we' source, probably Luke (Fitzmyer 1998:665), apparently joins Paul in Philippi and goes on to Troas. There Paul observes the Feast of Unleavened Bread as he continues to keep Jewish feasts. The season here is the spring, and there are seven weeks remaining until the arrival in Jerusalem in 21:17 (note also 20:16, which places the arrival by Pentecost) . . . Paul's coworkers, including the writer of the 'we' source, head for Assos by boat" (Bock, 619, 21).

v. 13 **Assos** A coastal town about 24 miles across the peninsula from Troas. "No reason is given for his choosing a route by land, but previously such separation and Pauline travel by land were for safety reasons (20:3). Witherington (1998: 608) and Polhill (1992: 420) suggest that this plan allows him a little more time to stay in Troas in order to see how the boy is doing and to address the believers. A boat ride is long and potentially dangerous, given its route around Cape Lectum (see Bruce 1990: 427 on the ship route). We do not know, however, why the different route is taken" (621).

v. 14 **Mitylene** The most important city on the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea

v. 15 **Kios** (Chios) An island off the west coast of Asia Minor with a city by the same name

v. 15 **Samos** Another island in the Aegean across the bay from Ephesus. "These short one-day trips from port to port are typical of ancient sea trips. They proceed carefully because of the combination of winds and rocky coasts tricky to navigate" (621; cf., Polhill, 420).

v. 15 **Miletus** A seaport about 30 miles south of Ephesus, perhaps 45 miles via the main coastal road. "Saving time would not likely have been the primary factor in Paul's avoiding Ephesus. It may be that it was not safe for him to go to Ephesus at this time (cf. 2 Cor 1:8-11). It also may be that he was tied to his ship's schedule, with Miletus, not Ephesus, as the port of call. Or it may be that Paul simply thought that if he visited Ephesus there would be no way to tear himself away quickly from the Christians there" (Polhill, 421).

v. 16 **day of Pentecost** Fifty days after Passover (cf., v. 6). Paul had a month or so to make it to Jerusalem for Pentecost. (cf. vv. 6, 13-15).

v. 17 **elders** See v. 28. "These elders would be responsible for shepherding the church and guiding it, as Paul's speech itself indicates" (Bock, 626).

v. 18 **arrived** Paul's ship must have spent a few days in Miletus or he must have changed ships there. It would have taken that long for the elders to get Paul's message and make their way from Ephesus. They probably arrived on Paul's third day there.

v. 18 **said** "This speech is quite distinctive among all the speeches reported in Acts. It is the only Pauline speech delivered to Christians which Luke has recorded, and we should not be surprised to discover how rich it is in parallels to the Pauline Epistles" (F F Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, NICNT, 412).

v. 19 **tested** Cf., "with tears and with trials that happened to me" (ESV, the NET Bible). "'Trials' (*peirasmon*) is a summary term for all the persecution Paul experienced (Acts 19:9; 20:3; 1 Thess. 2:14-15; 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18) as the Lord's bond servant (*douleumon*)" (Bock, 627).

v. 20 **hesitated** Cf., "did not shrink from declaring to you" (ESV). "This verb 'to shrink back' reappears in 20:27, where Paul does not shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God (Rengstorff, TDNT 7:598). He speaks about both encouraging and challenging things. Paul covers the full scope of what the gospel means" (627).

v. 21 **repentance** "Testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (NASB). "Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ (v. 21) is a beautifully balanced way of expressing what is essential to justification (cf. 26:20-23; Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 5:20-6:2). One must change his or her mind Godward and place trust in the Lord Jesus Christ" (Thomas Constable, "Dr. Constable's Notes on Acts," www.soniclight.com).

v. 22 **compelled** Paul wasn't disobedient. He felt constrained by the task he had been given to go to Jerusalem (cf. 19:21) even though he had been warned of the trouble that lay in store for him there (v. 23).

v. 28 **overseers** (See NIV margin "bishops") There was no distinction between elders and bishops in that day like there was from the second century on (cf., *presbuteros* ["elder"] and *episkopos* ["bishop" or "overseer"] in Tit 1:5-7). "Elders" were called "overseers" and told to pastor ("be shepherds of") the church (Ac 20:17, 28).

v. 32 **word** "The word of his grace," e.g., the gospel message

v. 35 **more blessed** This saying of Jesus, not found in the Gospels, may belong to oral tradition.

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

At 8 years old, Glenn Cunningham was seriously burned in a school fire. The doctor thought he would die and said it would be better if he did. He lost control of the lower portion of his body and was confined to a wheelchair. He would never walk again. However, Glenn refused to accept this prognosis. One day when his mother wheeled him outside, he threw himself from his chair and pulled himself through the grass to the picket fence. He pulled himself up and began to move along the fence, dragging his legs behind him. Day after day, he persevered in this ritual until finally he did regain use of legs. He began to walk and then run. In Madison Garden on June 16, 1934, Glenn Cunningham broke the world record and ran a mile in 4:06.8 minutes. He certainly was a man who was determined to "finish the race and complete the task" set before him. Likewise, Paul was determined to finish the task of taking the gospel to the world. Despite the hardships that would be awaiting him in Rome, he pressed on. Hopefully throughout this series your family has been challenged to take a step in the call to go here, there and everywhere to share the good news. Make a formal declaration as a family to live on mission. Write it down, pray over it and keep it somewhere visible to remind you to finish well!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Acts 20:13-38

1. Where was Paul heading on his journey?
2. Why was he going to Jerusalem (v. 22)?
3. How did Paul feel about his mission (v. 24)?

What Do You Think

Paul knew he would be facing prison and other hardships when he went to Jerusalem. Why do you think he went anyway? What hard thing has God asked you to do?

What R U Going To Do

Staying in the race to tell others about Jesus requires that we are being refueled in our own spiritual journey. Spend at least 5 minutes in God's Word every day this week.

___ S ___ M ___ T ___ W

___ TH ___ F ___ S!

Core Comp

Giving Away My Faith - I tell others about Jesus to help with God's work.

Memory Verse

Matthew 28:20 - *And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed *Scrolls* _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

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Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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