

June 7th Sunday 2015

Text: Acts 20:13-21

Topic: Paul's Farewell to the Ephesians' Elders

Paul was the spiritual father of the church at Ephesus. All the Ephesians Elders had become Christians through the preaching and teaching of Paul. Paul himself had baptised most of them (Acts 19:1-7) for this reason, all the elders were eager for the opportunity to meet with Paul and they came to Miletus to meet with him as requested. Thirty-miles walk was nothing to them because they have great respect for him. It is good to give respect to those who disciple us and give us knowledge of the gospel. They are source of encouragement to us.

Paul on meeting them reminded the Elders about his life among them with great humility and with tears. These two things, humility and tears are necessary for the success of any ministry. Paul's tears were tears of sorrow shed over the sins of his Christian brothers and the suffering he encountered for Jesus' sake. He has encountered several trials, plots of the Jews and other issues. (I Cor. 15:30-31, 2 Cor. 1:8-10).

Despite all these, he did not hesitate to preach and teach openly. Whatever was beneficial to the believers of Ephesus Paul did not preach what is pleasant to them but preach the Cross of Christ, signifying Christ as stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (I Cor. 1:23). He told them to repent and turn to God (Acts 17:30, 26:30). Wherever he went Paul preached that repentance alone without faith in Christ has no basis. Paul set an example for the new disciples to follow (I Cor. 11:1, Philip 3:17, 4:9). This is why his preaching was so effective. Paul avoided the style of the Pharisees, our modern prosperity preachers (Matt. 23:1-3)

Lesson: Whatever we are doing we should know that Paul has given us a great lesson as Gospel peddlers. If we are to preach, we should preach the hard truth; live a life style that is worthy of emulation. When we live what we Preach our gospel will be effective and produce seeds.

Prayer: Oh Lord Jesus' help me to have the courage to preach your word, speak it and practice it in Jesus Name.

June 8th Monday 2015

Text: Acts 20:22-27

Topic: Moving According To The Leading of the Holy Spirit

For Paul, going to Jerusalem was very dangerous. From the beginning the Jews in Jerusalem had been trying to kill Paul (Acts 9:29), nevertheless, in obedience to the leading of the Holy Spirit, Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem. For one thing, he felt under obligation to deliver to the Jerusalem church, the collections. Perhaps the Holy Spirit had given Paul still other reasons for going to Jerusalem, which are not mentioned. While Paul was at Corinth, he had written to the Romans asking them to pray that he might be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea (Rom. 15:31)

On his way to Jerusalem, Paul had heard repeated warning from his brethren that they would surely face prison and hardships. They warned him to turn back and not to go Jerusalem (Acts 21:4, 10-14). Paul was not afraid of persecution or death, he was willing to give up his life for the sake of the gospel of Christ (Acts 21:13, Philip 2:17, Col.

1:24) Paul had one goal in life and that was to finish the race and complete the task which the Lord Jesus had given him (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Paul had no care for either bodily life or bodily death. His only concern was that Christ be exalted in his body, whether in life or in death (Philip 1:20). What a faith that can keep us alive today in the days of hardship, persecution, killing and suppression.

Paul had made up his mind not to return even if he made it out of Jerusalem safely. He had decided to move forward to Rome and Spain no matter what happened to him. The Ephesians will never see him (Acts 19:21). He made himself clear of whatever the elders will turn to after his departure (Acts 18:6).

Lesson: As children of God, it is expected of us to lead and move according to the prompt of the Holy Spirit which mean remaining connected to the Holy Spirit, by being prayerful and focused in all we do. Spiritually sound men are always expected to do what they are asked to do no matter what lies ahead.

Prayer: Spirituality, sensitivity is a requirement to be in tune with you, help me to be connected always. Amen.

June 9th Tuesday 2015

Text: Acts 20:28-32

Topic: Keep Watch over Yourselves and All the Flocks

Paul advised his people the elders to keep watch over themselves! Satan seeks to attack leaders more than others. If a leader falls to Satan's attack, great harm comes to the flock that is, the church. The church leaders are appointed and equipped by the Holy Spirit to be shepherds of the flock. Therefore, they need to remain filled with the Holy Spirit. This refers to every leader including the family heads and groups in the church. Paul says let the Ephesians elders remember how the Holy Spirit had come upon them when he laid his hands on them (Acts 19:1-7). I do not know who prayed for you or laid his hands on you. You should remember that day and do your responsibility rightly. Do not go down and disgrace him. The leader of the church must "feed the flock" (John 21:15-17; 1 Peter 5:1-4) and must follow the example of Christ, the greatest shepherd of the sheep (John 10:11-15). Christ laid down his life for the sheep. He bought the church with his own blood. He died in order that we might live. False teachers and false leaders are like wolves (Matt. 7:15).

After Paul left them, such wolves will come and indeed come into the church (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 John 2:18-19). We should read what revelation 2:4-5 says. They are asked to be on their guard (1 Cor. 16:13; 1 Peter 5:8) and see to it that it never happened. Paul has been warning them for several years. This is why he committed them to the Lord, through the word of God and his grace.

Lesson: Today, we have the word of God's grace, the believers are asked to keep the word in their memory, but we have the word written. We should read them, obey them. It will build us up; keep us sanctified to receive our inheritance. As a leader we should be on guard, as believer we should be on guard. Falsehood is eating our churches and our homes. What are we doing at every level?

Prayer: O Lord Jesus, help me to have the grace to say no to false teaching no matter how sweet they sound. Give me the heart for the message of the cross in Jesus name. Amen.

June 10th Wednesday 2015

Text: Acts 20:33-38

Topic: Be an example in Life

Paul again offers his own life as an example for the Ephesians to follow. He laboured to support himself with his own hands. He did not covet anyone's silver or gold or clothing (2 Cor. 11: 9, 1 Thess. 2: 9, 2 Thess. 3:7-9). Unlike many leaders today that are seen as burden to the church. Paul was far from that leader- Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Matt. 5:42, 2 Cor. 9:6-11). This is to say that the leaders of churches should be resourceful and be full of other means of creating support for themselves and the church. It is not best to be asking but to sometimes give to the Gospel. Some pastors say, it is not their responsibility to give offering or tithe for their life is already a tithe to God. We are called to be resourceful, full of initiatives to create wealth and resources to aid the gospel and the poor. It is good to offer and responds to the Gospel. When we respond to the Gospel, we are not to be burden but a catalyst to the Gospel. It is not also a reason for church not to take care of their pastors. It is the full responsibility of the church to keep their pastor well and make sure he does not lack anything but on the other hand, pastors are to be giving pastors so that they do not lose their reward as Jesus stated in Mathew 5:42.

Lesson: We should be a giving party in the Gospel movement, by being givers, not only receivers so as to be blessed and be a source of blessing to others.

Prayer: Oh my Lord, help me to be resourceful and a giver to the expansion of the gospel that at the end, I may be blessed in Jesus name. Amen

June 11th Thursday 2015

Text: Acts 21:1-6

Topic: Facing all Odds

Paul and his companions set out across the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea and headed for Phoenicia (Modern Lebanon) which at that time was part of the Roman Province of Syria. After passing by the southern coast of Cyprus (Acts 13:4), they arrived in Tyre (Acts 12:20) an important city of Phoenicia. There was a church in Tyre, while the ship unloaded its cargo, Paul and his friends stayed with the disciples there. Some of these disciples had learned through the Holy Spirit that great trouble would come upon Paul in Jerusalem. Therefore they advised Paul not to proceed on the Journey (Acts 20:23). This is something we are lacking today, we hear different congregational prophesy, different things on the same subject contradicting each other. In our previous discussion we heard how some messages were passed to Paul on hardship awaiting him in Jerusalem but Paul was guided by the Holy Spirit, he remained obedient to the Holy Spirit rather than people. There is no single contradiction. The early church heard the Holy Spirit speak to them. Today we just raise issues without the Holy Spirit behind us. And we say the Lord told me to do so even when it is parallel with the word. The Host of Heaven never contradict themselves.

Paul was focused and ready to face all odds. He is ready to take risks as far as it is a directive from the Holy Spirit. Divine mandates are to be respected no matter how painful they are. The concern is whether believers of today are ready to listen to the Holy Spirit and face difficult assignments?

Lesson: Every believer should understand that God does not give contradictory messages, or messages. If it is contradictory, it is not of God, but of the devil. Let's be ready to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our days and obey the directives, no matter which direction He directs us.

Prayer: My Lord Jesus I pray that you will give me the grace to hear the Holy Spirit and His directives in life rather than men.

June 12th Friday 2015

Text: Acts 21:2-16

Topic: More Prophecy of Doom for Paul

From Ptolemais, Paul's ship sailed to the city of Caesarea in northern Israel, where the first Gentiles had believed in Christ (Acts 10:1) Paul and his companions stayed at the home of Philip. Philip had come to Caesarea twenty years earlier (Acts 8:39-40) Philip was one of the seven original deacons of the Jerusalem church (Acts 6:3-5). His four daughters had become well-known for their prophecies, they lived to be very old, and for many years they gave much help to the church. This is a great news that our children can be instruments of help to the church as mentioned of Philip. We as parents should always pray for our children to be a source of help and encouragement to the church.

Agabus was a prophet from the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:27-28). He prophesied that the Jews of Jerusalem would seize Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles (Romans), yet Paul did not turn back from Jerusalem. What a miserable situation for Paul. All message of doom to him, no message of encouragement, yet he

remains focus. Paul's heart and commitment to the Lord is a model to learn. He remain on the way to fulfill God's will not man's discouragement. For Paul's friends did not understand him just like the disciples of Jesus did (Mark 10:32-33).

They are like Peter who tried to stop Jesus (Mark 8:31-33). Paul asked them to stop weeping for him; the brethren are kind and caring. They feel Paul's situation and sympathize with him. If it is in their power, they would have stopped it that is true love for a leader. Paul's message is to unify and reconcile the Jewish and Gentiles Christian. What a sacrifice, a leader is paying.

Lesson: When God has given us a mandate to fulfill let no threat nor danger stops us, for God is with us always as He has promised (Matt 28:18-20)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, grant me the grace to take your message to where you are sending me regardless of the threats and danger. Help me to listen when you speak.

June 13th Saturday 2015

Text: ACTS 21:17 -26

Topic: Paul Arrived at Jerusalem

The Christian brothers in Jerusalem welcomed Paul and his companions warmly. They were grateful for the collection that had been raised by the gentile churches.

Paul reported to the Jerusalem elders how great are the number of gentile coming to Christ and the number of churches being established in Asia and Greece (Acts 14:27). Paul came along with some Gentiles representatives from different churches as a proof of their faith and love shown through their collections for the churches in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem elders praised God. This did not wave away the problem been prophesied. Jerusalem being a Jewish state with mostly Jewish Christians are followers of the Jewish-Law, the Law of Moses. This population has been brainwashed with false information that Paul has been misleading the gentile Christians not to follow the Law of Moses. This is a grave mistake. For this reason, most of the Jewish Christians Cast many doubts on Paul.

James and the elders of the church thought of ways to reassure the Jewish Christians about Paul and to bring reconciliation between them. Paul agreed with their plan. Others may see this as a compromise but Paul's mind is on bringing the Jews and gentiles to Christ by whatever means (Acts 16:3, 1 Cor. 9:20) whatever that is required, Christ is the ultimate purpose. What a sacrificial leader.

Lesson: Elders in the church should be ready to protect their leaders or pastors from false accusation labeled against them not to follow the crowd or members who have gone astray like this Jewish Christians.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Help me to stand for the truth even when the world has turned their back on.