

Acts 20

Passage Guide

Throughout the book of Acts we have seen the greatness and power of Jesus at work. He has taken broken men and women without hope and fully redeemed them. We have seen these same men and women be drastically changed by their encounter with Jesus and respond by giving their entire lives enjoying Him and building His church. They risked their lives, sold their possessions and forsook the pleasures of this world in order to find ultimate joy in Jesus. Their lives were now driven by a desire to see Jesus glorified in their lives as they brought this great joy to their cities. Their affections for Jesus drove them to this mission. They were eager to love without getting anything in return. This is how the gospel had changed them.

We also see this change displayed in the man known as Paul. He was at one minute hunting down Christians and breathing murderous threats. The next minute he encountered Jesus and nothing would ever be the same in Paul's life (Acts 9). We see Jesus care for Paul through the work of the church. We see how God uses Paul and the gifts He had given him to build the church and bring joy to the cities he encountered. Paul, the adversary of Christianity, is even used to write the Scriptures by the power of the Holy Spirit. In Paul's life the greatness and far reaching love and mercy of the Father is revealed to us. We come to understand that no one is too far from the Father's grace and love.

In Acts 20, Paul's journey is drawing to a close. He knows what awaits Him in Jerusalem and willingly embarks on the journey knowing it is what God has called him to do (Acts 20:23). Before he goes he writes a farewell letter, addressed to the overseers (elders) of the church of Ephesus. It is addressed to the church he once persecuted, but now loves deeper than he ever thought possible. He addresses the overseers to care for the church of God as he has done (Acts 20:28-31). Paul also reveals the calling of all believers in Acts 20:24. It is the very calling he has lived out in His life by the power of the Holy Spirit. He writes, "But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God." The Holy Spirit led Paul to die to himself and live in His power as he brought glory to God in every aspect of his life. We too are to forsake our own lives and live to testify of the grace Jesus has shown us in our careers, in our marriages and in our city.

The book of Acts provides us a great opportunity to ask ourselves some difficult questions. Are we following in the footsteps of the early believers found in the Book of Acts? Do our lives testify to the gospel of grace as theirs did? Do we treat people with love and grace no matter how they treat us? Does the way we serve the church testify to the gospel of grace? Do we love our elders and serve without needing anything in return? Take time to reflect on the gospel legacy that was left by the early believers found in the book of Acts. Honestly evaluate if we are living our lives as testimonies to the gospel of grace for God's glory.

This calling is not to be done on our own. Nor should we answer these questions on our own. As believers we are called to live together in community and speak truth into each other's lives. Answer these questions collectively as a group and individually with those who you have let into your lives. Ask them if you are living out the gospel of God's grace in every aspect of your life (finances, relationships, serving the church, etc.). As followers of Christ our lives are no longer our own. This truth which would have at one time seemed burdensome is now life-giving after we have stood in the greatness of Jesus and been captured by His grace. Therefore, let our lives reflect the greatness of the God who has poured out His grace and mercy upon us. Let us treat others as He has treated us. Let us love one another as He has loved us and may the losing of our lives bring great joy and redemption to our city!

Application Questions

- In what areas of your life are you glorifying God (finances, relationships, workplace, etc)? How do you bring glory to God in those areas? Where are you lacking?
- How are we as a Community Group showing Jesus' love and grace to our city? How could we start doing this more?
- Who are we allowing to speak into our lives? Who speaks grace into our lives as they help to point out places that need to be redeemed?

Prayer

- Ask God to help us lose our lives in order to bring great joy and redemption to our city.
- Ask God to help our affection for Him completely replace our desire for sin.
- Take time to pray for the elders (overseers) of Vintage21 Church. Ask God to give them wisdom, strength and rest in the Lord as they lead us.