

32. Farewell by Paul

March 16, 2014

“Fair winds and a following sea” is the traditional farewell of a mariner. The full version is “Fair winds and following seas and long may your big jib draw!” The phrase may also be considered a Naval blessing as well as a farewell that was often used at a naval funeral. Despite the pleasant condition of a following sea alluded to in the phrase, the condition may not always be all that pleasant due to the circumstance.

Some day and at some time, we all need to say, “Farewell” to someone in our life or we say it to them because we are the ones who are departing. Saying farewell to your family members or friends will be a painful moment as we will be missing them. Separation is something that can give difficult times for us. It’s never easy to say goodbye and express farewell wishes to someone you cared for a length of time, especially when you know that you may never see those people again.

In chapter 20 of the Book of Acts, we see apostle Paul saying farewell to his beloved church people in Asia Minor as well as the leaders of the church in Ephesus. Paul knew that he would not see them again because the difficult time was ahead of him.

In the final third of the Book of Acts, Dr. Luke, the author of the Book records Paul’s final missionary journey to Jerusalem, his arrest there, and his voyage to Rome. As much as Jesus set His mind to do God the Father’s will in the crucifixion and resurrection, so Paul determined to finish his course with joy, no matter what the cost might be.

A. A FAREWELL JOURNEY

Acts 20:1-5 After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia. 2 Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece 3 and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. 4 And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. 5 These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

Did you notice “the uproar in Ephesus” in v1? Of course, you remember the incident of the 25,000 confused people in the theater demanding something that they were not quite sure. Apostle Paul made a kind of a cryptic comment in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 regarding this:

1 Corinthians 15:32a If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus

What an appropriate description for that crazy mob gathering! They would have torn Paul’s body with their bare hands if they could even though they didn’t know why. They were merely manipulated by greedy and angry blood thirsty people like Demetrius and his silversmith cohorts.

After three years of ministry in Ephesus, a sizable number of disciples have been raised up. At this point, the congregation of the Ephesian church did not need more evangelism, rather exhortation from apostle Paul to grow in the Lord Jesus.

Since we don't use the word 'exhortation' in our day to day conversation often, we need to know the exact definition. Here is a simple definition: "the ability to apply revealed truth to life." The Greek word for 'exhort' is "parakaleo" a word which literally means "to call alongside to help." In this same sense, the Holy Spirit is a "parakletos", the Helper or the Comforter in John 14:

John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

You see, an exhortation can be a warning, a comforting statement, or an encouraging comment. And its value is immeasurable.

Proverbs 15:23 A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, And a word spoken in due season, how good it is!

Exhortation was a gift Paul had, and he dispensed it generously to his beloved fellow believers of Ephesus before he left them to head to Macedonia.

Paul had two goals in mind as he visited the various churches. His main purpose was to encourage and strengthen the believers so that they might stand with truth to the Lord and be effective witnesses for Jesus. The second was to finish taking up the collection for the needy believers in Jerusalem, not for himself.

Once again, Paul had to change his plans, this time because of a Jewish plot to kill him on board ship and to toss his body overboard in a crowded ship that was filled with Jewish pilgrims for Passover or Pentecost. Paul didn't change the plan because he was afraid of these Jewish assassin wannabes, rather he knew that he had a job to do from the Lord.

Before we move on to the next section, I want you to pay attention to the people who traveled with Paul. I asked you to underline a couple of guys' names in v4:

"Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians"

Aristarchus' name was connected with 'aristocracy,' the ruling class. It's likely that he came from a wealthy and powerful family. 'Secundus' was a common name for a slave. It meant "Second." During that time slaves were often not called by their real names. For example, the first-ranking slave in a household would often be called 'Primus.' The second-ranking slave was often called 'Secundus.' Paul treated them all as brothers in Christ. He lived out the truths he taught and wrote to others:

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

James, a half brother of Jesus our Lord echoes this in his Book 'James':

James 2:2-4 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, "You sit here in a good place," and say to the poor man, "You stand there," or, "Sit here at my footstool," 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?

Showing partiality is how you make church cliques. Some people think that they are better than other believers because of their spiritual, financial, social, educational status or even mere appearance. Hear me well, if you are planning to make a clique in our church, please don't, not here. I despise church cliques because they are very divisive to the body of Christ.

B. A FAREWELL SERVICE

Acts 20:6-12 But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. 7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. 8 There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. 9 And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. 10 But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." 11 Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till day-break, he departed. 12 And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Paul was not able to make to Jerusalem for the annual Passover celebration as he originally planned, so now his goal was to arrive there at least by Pentecost. Notice that the pronouns are "us" and "we" as Dr. Luke joined Paul from Philippi for the last portion of the journey.

I want all of you to notice another thing in v7:

v7 Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread

Of course, the first day of the week is Sunday. The early church met to worship on Sunday. The Jews observed the Sabbath on the seventh day, Saturday. But the Christians met on the first day of the week, Sunday in honor of the day of Jesus' resurrection. We also remember that the church was born on the first day of the week when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

The Seventh-Day Adventist people insist that to follow God properly Christians should have their worship service on Saturday as the OT people did on Sabbath. They follow many OT regulations, but not all. But they are contradicting themselves. They get in their cars on Saturday to travel more than a half mile while orthodox Jews would not drive on Sabbath at all because it is considered a labor. Starting the engine of their car is igniting a light in the spark plugs of the engine and it is also against the Sabbath's rules.

Listen, I agree with what apostle Paul said regarding emphasizing one day over another. For me, Sunday is a serious work day:

Romans 14:5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

If you are looking for a church where you want to be fed with biblical instructions straight from the Bible, then pay attention to what is taught from the pulpit of that church. Many of the churches in America replace teaching of the Word of God with studying of some fancy pastors' books, feel-good motivational messages, concert-like worship, or even dramas.

The Word of God is important to the people of God, and the preaching and teaching of the Word must be emphasized. If you don't find it at that church, go somewhere else where you can be fed from the Bible.

Paul sensed the need to preach for a long time because he was ready to depart the next day. He knew he might never see these particular Christians again – so he preached until someone dropped dead, literally. Don't you ever tell me that I teach long sermons. I am not as long-winded as Paul.

Let's not be hard on young man Eutychus. This poor guy not only nodded off while the great apostle Paul was teaching, but also every generation across the entire world can read about him. Can you imagine meeting him in heaven? The first words out of our mouths will be, "So you are the one who fell off the window while Paul was teaching..."

A couple of things for sure for Eutychus, I bet that he'd never look for a seat near the window again and nor did he fall asleep during any church sermons.

By the way, if you have a tendency to fall asleep during the service here, please note that we don't have an apostle to resuscitate you back to life. Try not to fall asleep on me.

The Word of God is anything but boring. It should be a crime to make teachings of the Word of God boring. That means that pastors or Bible teachers didn't prepare their teachings well. I've seen a pastor whose teachings in the Book of Romans were so sloppy and unprepared that I had to wonder what he did before the teachings.

When a pastor teaches, he should take great care to find the right words that will act as a guiding rod in the lives of the people who listen to him, stimulating and urging them into action – not sleep.

Being a pastor should not be considered a job, rather it is a calling from God. It is an awesome task that no human should take it lightly.

I found five ways to get rid of your pastor. Write these down somewhere so that you can use them when you want to get rid of me:

- 1) Sit up front, smile and say "amen" every time he says something good. He will preach himself to death.
- 2) Pat him on the back and tell him what good work he is doing in the church and community. He will work himself to death.
- 3) Increase your offering in the church. Then he will suffer from mental shock.
- 4) Tell him you have decided to join the evangelistic group and win souls for the Lord. He will probably suffer a heart attack.
- 5) Get the whole church to band together and pray for him. He will get so efficient that some other church will hear about him and offer him their pastoral position. That will take him off your hands.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) To strengthen other's lives, encouragement is essential.

2) Encouraging one another calls for availability.

3) Being available includes communication.

Don't save your nice remarks for your loved ones for their funerals. Let them know now you love them and care for them.