

Paul's Farewell to Ephesus

by Paris Reidhead

Paul's farewell to Ephesus emphasizes the importance of being a consistent witness for Christ, serving the Lord with humility and dependence, and being willing to face challenges and difficulties in order to share the Gospel with others.

Scripture: Matthew 24:12, Acts 20:13, Acts 20:28, 1 Corinthians 9:16, 1 Corinthians 15:10, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 1 Timothy 4:12, 2 Timothy 2:2, 2 Timothy 4:7, Revelation 2:4

Topics: "Christian Ministry", "Spiritual Courage"

Description

Paris Reidhead preaches about Paul's farewell to Ephesus, emphasizing the importance of being prepared for parting ways and the responsibility to continue the work of ministry. He highlights Paul's example of conducting himself consistently with his testimony, serving the Lord with humility and compassion, and being willing to endure struggles and afflictions for the sake of Christ. Reidhead urges the congregation to have holy courage, contempt for worldly comforts, and a commitment to finish the work entrusted to them, warning against the dangers of complacency and spiritual decline.

Transcript

Paul's Farewell to Ephesus By Paris Reidhead* There is every reason to think that Paul may have had a rented ship, or someone gave him the use of a ship. The 13th verse, (Chapter 20 of Acts), And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: ... and they sailed again -- in the 15th verse -- and they tarried. Very seldom do you find a ship is going to tarry for one of its passengers unless there is some relationship between the captain and the passenger, and I rather think reading this that they may have had put at their disposal for Paul's party a ship, possibly from someone that had been brought to know the Lord through the ministry.

We are not told. But visualize now Paul as he has moved down this coast, and then sailed from Miletus in verse 17 to -- from Miletus rather, he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church... verses 18-38. Now as we see this portion of Scripture, reminded of all that has gone before, everything that we have seen in these weeks and months of Paul's ministry in Ephesus has been to prepare this people for this day. And this is always the case with every earnest pastor and teacher, be it Sunday School Teacher, or children's worker, Pastor of a church, or elders in their faithful ministry.

We recognize that we meet to part again. This is always the case. We are aware of the fact in a congregation such as this in New York City that some 23 to 25 per cent of the people that are with us in

any given year will not be present a year from that day. This has proved to be the annual change and movement. Some of course have lost interest. Others have for reasons best suited to them have changed their location of worship in the same community. But the largest proportion have by way of death or change of occupation or completion of their schooling, or going on to some other form of Christian service, have gone.

And thus we are constantly preparing for this challenge of leaving, this responsibility to leave, and we are aware of this. We recognize this, we realize this. Our hearts are filled with a constant sense of parting. We cannot escape it. Paul from the very first day that he came to Ephesus was trying to make himself expendable. Brother Emery, Miss Battles who witnessed to us tonight from the Mission Field, have communicated to us again the fact that there has been a sense of grief at parting, of grief at leaving.

And so it impresses us with two things at the very outset, that life that you can touch for the Lord Jesus Christ must be touched while it is possible, while there is contact. You are not always, Sunday School Teacher, going to have these children under your care. The impulse of love that prompts you to pray for them must be followed now. They are not always going to be there. And the instruction that you give must be given now. They are not always, going to be present before you, and they are not always going to have that opportunity.

Every time I come behind this desk I realize that I am speaking for the last time to someone. They are going to move, they are going to die, something is going to come, and someone will never hear me speak again. And if God is going to use me to touch that life it will have to be then. And this must constantly be before us. We are dying men and women, ministering to and sharing with dying people, passing, changing, constant flow of the motion of our people. It has always been this way, and it is certainly what we sense it.

Therefore the moment of strategic opportunity with someone is now. It will always be now. And I am confident that this is the very spirit in which Paul ministered the three months that he was in the synagogue, the two years that he was in the hired house and all of his ministry there in Ephesus. It behooves us to recognize what is expected of us, you as a Sunday School Teacher, you as an Elder, or a Deacon, or a Christian in that place of business with the opportunity to serve the Lord Jesus now, as a student in school now.

The first thing that Paul tells us is that he conducts himself in a manner consistent to his testimony. And how imperative it is that we should understand that the Apostle, writing to young Timothy, is speaking not only to this young man, but to all of us of whatever age, and whatever place, when he says, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in manner of living." (I Tim. 4:12) He conducted himself in a way that was consistent with what he was saying.

And how essential this was. Certainly there were critics of Paul; certainly there will be criticism of you and of me. We live in a day when it is much easier often to criticize than it is to correct, or to reprove, or to rebuke. This is the simplest thing there is to do. But nevertheless Paul had a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men, and so he could say that you know how from the first day that I have been with you, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. He was preaching by every activity, every responsibility, every task; everything he did he considered to be as part of the testimony and the witness of his life. You must recognize that this is also incumbent upon you. Then, he made it his business to serve the Lord. Night and day serving the Lord, constantly serving the Lord, serving the Lord was the

reason for his business. He had no other thing. O yes. He made tents. We see that. He taught in school. Yes. Many ministries came to his hand, but in everything, and through it all, and over it all, he was serving the Lord.

We do well to remember what the Cobbler Carey said long before they trusted him to go to India. Over his bench he had the sign, so clear, so explicit, My business is to serve the Lord, but I cobble shoes to pay expenses. Let this be known to you that your business is to serve the Lord in the humblest of tasks, whether it is housekeeping, or office work, or as a student in school, you are serving the Lord by doing all that you do with an eye single to His glory. This Paul saw.

It was his business to serve the Lord. Then of course he had something else. It was in the next words, a secret as to whether or not that service is going to be effective or going to be useless. He said, serving the Lord with all humility of mind. It does not make any difference whether it be preaching. If there is any effect that is profitable to the hearts and people listening to one preach it is simply because God condescended to use lips of clay. There is certainly nothing in the speaker or the word.

If there is any ministry in teaching or in music, or whatever it might be, he knows best his own heart who realizes that it is not by might nor power, but by His Spirit. And therefore when you serve the Lord by witness, let it not be with arrogance ever, or with pride or with conceit. Let it be not with excellency of men's speech, or with wisdom. For just the moment that such subtle conceits sweep into our mind the Spirit of God is unable to do His work through us. Humility, the realization that you speak a word, and unless God puts the feathers to that arrow, and drives it to the heart it is going to fall to the ground.

But if you do it as unto the Lord, it can be as an arrow drawn at hazard, and pierce the armor of someone who thought he was protected against the truth of God. And so it is with that utter dependence upon the Lord, laborers together with Him. Just the moment that someone says, "Well, look how God used me," that is the moment when God is no longer able to use that person. It is so imperative, so absolutely imperative that we learn, whether it be in our witness, or counselling, or whatever it be, even in our prayer ministry, he said, "Serving the Lord with all humility of mind."

But more than that, it was with deep affection, with tenderness, with compassion at heart that Paul did all that he did, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears. For he saw the people as bound by Satan, he saw them as blinded by the god of this world, he saw them as hell bound in all of the nefarious purpose of Satan to use every means possible the anger of the people, and the persecution of the Jews, and the natural gravitation of their own heart, to sin and iniquity, to keep them from coming to Christ.

And so it was not just that he served the Lord as a duty he must perform, but there was an identification with the people and an identification that caused his heart to reach out and yearn after them. And if your ministry is to be fruitful, it must be with tender compassion. Oh, it is one thing to say, You are lost and need a Savior. But there is all the difference in the world if you have bathed first this person's name before the Lord in tears and then can say, You are lost and need a Savior.

But then there was not only that. There were many testings. There were many struggles. There was constant difficulty. But the Apostle did not care. The enemies that he made he realized that the commendation of a man is not only the friends he has but the enemies that he has acquired. See to it that you acquire the proper set of enemies, and you can to some degree be sure of your success. Some people's friendship is a liability so great that you cannot afford it, and therefore Paul was not the least

concerned about the fact that he had made enemies.

But he had made them in the course of seeking the best interests of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the church that he was sent to establish. Now if you will see this, if you will see that it is necessary to stand for the right, to stand for the truth, you cannot give ground on something that is a principle today, and expect to have the confidence of those you will ask to follow you tomorrow; because they are not quite sure when you are going to give ground again. And so the Apostle Paul was absolutely willing to have the synagogue turn against him, rail upon him, plot for his undoing, because he was determined to stand for that message which had been delivered to him.

So must you, and you must see to it that these things which Paul says of himself are equally true in your life if you and I expect to have the blessing of God upon us. But these as important as they are, to us as they were to him, but point up and prepare the way for the actual witness that is to come from you. And when you understand the nature of your witness, then you are going to see something of what God has

for you. For we find that he tells us that he was first of all a plain preacher. I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. He was a plain preacher. He was not trying to be clever. He was not trying to impress anyone. He said that he had given up long ago trying to be tricky smart. The only thing I want to do is teach. I want to share. I want to communicate. You know sometimes people's mouths are closed because they are afraid that they are going to be criticized for their grammar.

I was reading just today in a book review in the New York Times that there is a new life of D. L. Moody¹ that has just been printed within the week, and they said that this man who had said that Jerusalem with two syllables, and Dan'l instead of Daniel, and murdered the king's English was able to move even England to their knees before the Lord Jesus Christ, because people were not very interested after they heard him for a few moments, and the grammar he used; they were concerned about the Lord of whom he spoke.

And if this becomes your desire, if these that we have mentioned are true in you, then when you speak of Christ just plainly, simply, saying, I am determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, then you can expect to be heard. He was. He said, I have shown you, I have taught you. He was a powerful preacher. Why? Because of his eloquence. No. We have already said that his eloquence had been completely minimized. Why was he powerful? Because he was absolutely convinced of the truth of what he had said.

I have heard it said that an eloquent person is one that has something has to say, and a passionate desire to say it. Do you know why you may not have been eloquent in your witness for Christ? One of two reasons. First, you may not have anything to say. And secondly, you may not have any real desire to say it. But you become eloquent the moment that you have something that is burning in your heart to say, and you have a passionate desire to say it. That is all it takes. The words will fit themselves.

And you can study your words, and you can plan your diction, but if you do not say the thing from a heart that burns then it will be just as the wind that blows through the trees bare of leaves. He was a powerful preacher because he knew that what he said was so. He knew that what he taught was true. He knew that it would do everything that he said it would. He was a profitable preacher. Those who heard him profited from it, and he was a painstaking preacher. He went publicly whenever he could get a group.

But he also went from house to house. And he was a persevering preacher. Faithful. This is the word. He said, I was going from one place to another, from home to home, wherever there was an opportunity; I was sharing everything that was profitable unto you. There is not a thing that I had that I was not willing to commit to you. I have absolutely determined that I was going to give you everything that was necessary for the day when I had to leave you. And so he persevered in it.

They did not learn the first time. They did not hear, they did not understand. But he was determined that there would be nothing laid to his charge. Now do you realize that the person you are touching may not know a fraction of what you know, and it is your responsibility to share it with him. You know that ever since I stepped behind this pulpit nearly seven years ago now I have stood before you with one message, God's intent is that every Christian be a witness, every Christian be a preacher, and every Christian be a servant of Christ.

And He gave evangelists and pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints into the work of the ministry. Now that is exactly what the Apostle did. For two years, day after day, he gathered the people together to teach them to teach, to teach them to preach, to teach them to witness. And the whole area was evangelized. Why? Because he multiplied himself in the people. And if I fail, if God is unable with all the means that are available, and the dedication that is involved to bring you to that place that you see that your function in the body of Christ is to be a witness for the Lord Jesus, and to have a ministry for Him, then I will have to say that the ministry has failed.

Paul, looking at these people, whom he loved as dearly as he could possibly love any, said, I have given to you everything I had. I have with painstaking care and persevering intent shared with you day after day, because I knew the time would come when it would all rest on you, it will all fall on you; and if I have not committed to you adequately, if I have not shared with you completely, if I have not brought you into every privilege that I have known, said he, then I have certainly failed the Lord.

Now it is in your hands. I have kept back nothing, I have showed everything. He is an impartial preacher. He is not having a favorite few. He says, I have testified to Jews, and to Greeks. He realized that God had called him to share with any that were prepared to hear. And you, too, have got to say that. Someone says, Well I have been called of God to witness to the Jews. I do not believe that. I believe God has called you to witness to sinners. I have 1 Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church

been called of God to witness to the Greeks. I do not believe that. God has called you to witness to sinners. Well I have been called to witness to college students. I do not believe that. God has called you to witness to sinners. I have been called to work with children. I do not believe that. You have been called to witness to sinners concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, you shall be witnesses unto Me. And this is the call that He has given, and this is the responsibility.

Probably He may give you a particular gift of enablement that will cause you to have a heart of concern and reception with Jews, or Greeks, or children, or students. But we must understand that we are to be impartial, and to pass none by to whom our hearts might be open. He was a pointed preacher. He was not trying to get into philosophical speculation and argument. He realized there was absolutely no profit in that. He said, God has called me for one thing, God has sent me for one thing, and I am going to do that one thing.

Now. This is the preparation that He asks of you. This is the ministry for which He is preparing you. This is that which is before you. Then he feels his own prospects for the future. There is something that you have to understand about this man, there is something you have to understand about your own life if you are to be a fruitful servant of Christ, and that is that you are to expect in the normal course of events that suffering and affliction is to be your lot. Now, there is a difference you know between being a pessimist and an optimist.

And frankly I think I would like to view myself as a dedicated and consecrated pessimist. Now let me explain what I mean. I always expect the worst, and so when anything happens better than that I am just delighted. I have not always been that way. I used to expect the best, and then I was always being disappointed. So when you come to the place that you expect nothing but failure, and nothing but... then when anything happens better than that your heart is absolutely delighted, because this is just... why if you expect an ear of corn and you only get a kernel, you are disappointed; but if you are not expecting any corn and you get a kernel... why that is 100 per cent improvement.

And this is the way with the Apostle Paul. This is the thing with him. Paul was looking forward to going to Jerusalem, and he says, I am expecting suffering and affliction. Now he had it, but he had something more than that. He had marvelous opportunities, and he was, I believe... Now I want... This has been very hard for me to find out, because there are some things in here at the first reading that you do not quite see, why the Spirit of God witnessed in every city, through all of these, that there would be bombs, that there would be suffering, and persecution, Why?

Do you know why? I think that God wanted the people in Ephesus to know that Paul was not running away from persecution, and he was not running away from danger, and he was not running away from difficulty, because they were going to have difficulty, they were going to have persecution, and they were going to have danger. So he said, I do not want you to think I am leaving you because it is getting a little too hot for me here in Ephesus. Every place that Paul went the Spirit of God said, When you go to Jerusalem, you will be bound; when you go to Jerusalem, you will suffer; when you go to Jerusalem, you will...

All right. So Paul says, When I go to Jerusalem, I am going bound in the Spirit, I do not know what will befall me, but I do know that there is a storm cloud, and I do know that every place I go the Spirit of God witnesses as to what is going to transpire, but I am firm in my resolution. I know that none of these things move me. I realize God has called me to go, and therefore I am going. And it is this; I believe that ought to motivate every missionary. It ought to motivate everyone that goes.

How easy it is for us in our minds to visualize going to a difficult mission field, and because we are there the people are going to come. Oh, they will. And there is going to be joyous reaping. But you know there is going to be something else. They are going to turn their back on you. There are going to be problems, and there are going to be difficulties, and there is going to be friction, with missionaries, and with people, and with proud government. But you see, if you know in advance what is going to happen then you are not discouraged when it comes.

Oh, it is wonderful to know, God called me, God is sending me. You cannot frighten me by what is going to take place. I am not going to leave when I get there because of anything that happens to me while I am there. God knew all about it before He told me to go, and since He knew all about it when He told me to go; it is utterly unthinkable that I should leave because it happened after I got there. It is a reflection upon God that He had His back turned. No. Paul said, I want you to know that as I go to Jerusalem I have no

illusions.

I have been told of God there is going to be suffering, and difficulty, but I am going nonetheless. There are several things that a servant of God has to have, and Paul tells us about these. The first is holy courage and resolution. If you want to go with the Lord, and for the Lord, there has to be holy courage and resolution. There must be. It is absolutely imperative that there be. No alternative. If you go, thinking that it is going to be an easy place, you are just going to slide sort of softly into it, and everything is going to move to your pleasure, you are going to be terribly disappointed. But if you go, knowing that there is going to be difficulty and hard things, things that are difficult to understand. There is going to be

friction. There is going to be abrasion. But God in His grace is sending you. Then when you get there, you say, Thank you, Lord. There has been courage put into your heart, and resolution into your spirit. Something else, if you are to be a fruitful servant of Christ. There has to be a holy contempt of life, and its comforts, and its continuity. Unless you have that, it is very difficult. Now I am not talking about foolishness. I think Paul loved life dearly. He could have let go of that spar on the ship when he was shipwrecked.

His hands were numb, and he was tired, and he was sick. He could have died so easily. Just let go, and slowly sink beneath the waves, one breath and it is over. He loved life. But he despised it. Isn't that a conundrum? Why did he love it? He said, For me to live is Christ. For me to die is gain. And he could not let go of that spar to which he clung, because Christ was not through with him. But he could not avoid the issue. If he is going to die in Jerusalem, well and good.

I have no purpose to live but to glorify Christ, and if He is through with me that is good. I am ready. There has to come this to every heart. My friend you have to come to the place in your Christian pilgrimage that you are prepared to die rather than to live outside the will of God. Because until you have come to the place where you have embraced death, you have not any right to life. And there is a place of the Cross, you know, where all of this is brought to issue. For when you see yourself as crucified with Christ, as Paul did, then you can say, I am crucified with Christ, to my own plan, and purpose, and intent, and desire, and career, and ambitions.

My only desire is to glorify Him, and Christ lives in me. So, when He is through with me I am through. It is a dreadful thing to have a sense of bondage to the fact that you must exist even at the sacrifice of the will of God. It is a wonderful thing to be released of the necessity of living. I have not had much experience in this, but I remember about ten years ago when an issue arose in which I could not twist or turn, or deviate because of deep conviction, convictions I hold until the present moment unchanged, one of my pastor friends came to my study at home, and he said, You know, all you need to do is just soft peddle, and change a little, and it will be all right.

He said, No one is trying to hurt you. Well I said, I am sure they are not, and I am not trying to hurt anyone. He said, Well after all you have got to look out for your family you know. You have got to eat. I shook my head and said, No. They do not have to eat. He looked at me as much as to say, Where is the door? What is the matter with this fellow? He said, Well you have got to live. I said, No. I do not have to live. Well your family has got to live. I said, No. My family does not have to live.

What do you mean? He said, They have been saying that you have lost your mind. I guess you have. Is that right? You have got to eat. You have got to live. I said, No, I have not lost my mind. I have just lost my life. I came to the place some months ago where I decided that the important thing was not for me to eat,

or to live. The important thing was to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and stand for what He gave me. I do not have to live, and I do not have to eat, but I must stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

That I have to do. I have to do that. But there have been many people along the way that have chosen to die, rather than to compromise their convictions. Is life so sweet, so dear, that one will hold it at the cost of Him, the praise of Him they love? Oh, let it come to your heart tonight that there is a holy contempt of life. Not a wastefulness, not a squandering, nor a foolishness, but you have simply said that I have settled this matter of being afraid to die. I have already done it.

I am rather troubled by the people that are trying always to put themselves to death. It is a very slow way. Nibble off an inch at a time. That is no way to do. That is not what we teach. We teach that the day Jesus Christ died you died. And it is to plunge the sword of the truth right through the heart of your own interests. I am crucified with Christ. It is over. It is one fell swoop. And this is what brings release. This is what Paul had. Then there was a holy concern to go through with the work that had been committed to him by the Lord.

He said, I want to finish my ministry. There it was. He had no desire to live beyond the point of usefulness, and no desire to live for living's sake. He said, I have a passionate desire to finish the task that has been committed to me by the Lord I love. And he said, I not only want to finish it, but I want to finish it well, I want to finish it joyously. I want to finish it for the glory of Christ. No wonder he could say when he wrote to Timothy in the second letter, I have fought a good fight, and kept the faith; I have finished the course.

O dear friend, you do not want to just exist, just so that you can get even with the government for the social security you are not paying, and use it all up. That is no reason for being, no reason for living. You have got to have some nobler purpose than this, some higher reason for existing than existence' sake. There has got to come a place where for me to live is Christ. And I want to finish my course, and I want to finish it well, I want to finish it with joy. I want my life to count for eternity.

This is what we see in Paul's ministry, and this is what it has got to mean to you. This is what has got to happen to you. God has a plan for your life, and as definite as He had for Paul, and you are going to have to finish your course with shame, with grief, and

heartache unless as Paul you commit yourself, saying, I have holy courage and resolution. I will proceed with that which is before me, even at the cost of my life, or if it is in the will of God that I die in this task well and good. But I am going to proceed every day I live on the basis that I want to finish what He gave me, and finish it well. Then there is something else. If you have been faithful in what you have been committed to share with others, you can expect them to be faithful when it comes at such a cost as that.

That which thou hast received, said Paul, the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Life brings forth life. And so it is that Paul had every reason to expect that those who had received at such a cost... for remember he had served well, and hard, and laboriously, and sacrificially. Remember that everything that came, came out of his own sacrifice of love and time, and effort, even the food that the Christians ate. For he not only provided for himself, but he also provided for others.

So he has said, As I was among you, laboring by my own hands to support those whom the Lord trusted to me, I want you to realize that I have not invested all this truth, and all this love, and all this emotion, all this longing, all this prayer, to have it frittered away. I have given you myself, I have given you my life, I have a right to expect something in return, said Paul. I have a right to expect you to evaluate all that you have

received, and to take heed to yourself, you that are elder, and take heed to the flock of God, feed them, and shepherd them, and care for them, because this has not been child's play.

This has been the noblest, the highest work in all the world, and I have a right to expect an investment made as sacrificially, and patiently, as this has been, said he, shall be regarded by you, and you will accept your responsibility. For now it is on you. This is what every missionary does. The time has come, said we to the little church around us, when we will have to leave. It will be your responsibility. You are going to have to do the work. You are going to have to perform the task.

You are going to have to. Always it is this. But then, of course, the last thing we see is that he reveals the prospect of the church's future. And this is always true. It is true in this church; it is true in every church. Wherever God begins to work Satan's wolves gather, waiting for the fence to open, the door to be unkept. And so we can absolutely expect that in this church, that the first person that gives any degree of carelessness is going to open the door for Satan's wolves to get in.

And oh, said Paul, I want you to realize that even some of you that are right here in this congregation, this company now with tears in your eyes, as I take leave of you, said he, you are going to be appealed to by vanity and temptation and sin; and you are going to desert the Lord you profess to serve, and bring shame upon the church of Christ. That is what happened in Ephesus. This is what happens every place. Satan is constantly looking for those whom he can beguile and entice, and there is not a one however long they have walked with the Lord that is not subject to this.

He said, take heed to yourselves, and take heed, because I know that as I depart from you grievous woes shall enter in among you, and also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. He warned as to what would happen. This will always happen. It happens on the mission field. Think of the anguish we are going through in Congo on this very issue today. And it will happen in every family. It happens in every church, and so said he, Take heed, watch, remember.

And my dear friend, the church of Jesus Christ here at Times Square, wherever you find a company of believers must constantly watch, continuously remember. Always take heed. Because there are wolves without, and there is temptation within. There is a great price to truth, and a great responsibility with it, and a great responsibility for it. Paul says, I never sought worldly wealth, I never sought those symbols of status, and I never sought to be prosperous with garments and possessions that would mark me off as someone great.

He said, That has not been my interest. I have coveted no man's apparel. I have coveted no man's silver or gold. He said, I have been willing to work with my own hands. It was not for money that I have served you. It was because I wanted Jesus Christ to get in you as individuals, and in you as the church, the vehicle for the revelation of His glory that He desires. And so he said, I know what is going to happen. But oh, if you will just take heed, if you will remember what you have been taught, if you live in the Word, if you will take the whole counsel of God, if you will garrison yourself in prayer, and guard yourself in truth, everything that I have invested, and everything I have done will go on, and on, and on for the glory of Christ.

Oh, what a pity it is that at Ephesus now all you have, so I am told, or from the film pictures that I have seen of missionaries, there is just a few silent pillars, and rocks, and ruins. And the church that was once there failed to heed the warning of Paul, and now it is nothing but the roost for pelicans, and vultures. They lost their first love, they did not accept the warning, they did not avoid the seducing spirits that came to

them. I wonder if one day, I wonder if the Lord tarries, if one day there may not

be ruins in America as there are in Africa, and in Asia Minor, and vultures may roost where proud windows once gleamed, if the Lord tarries and spares us if He might. It may come that way, for to whom much is given, from them much is required. No nation in all history has had so much truth and done so little with it as America. I think our land is absolutely ripe for judgment, and I think the responsibility rests squarely in the hands of the church, whether that judgment come or be averted with you.

And I hear the Lord Jesus Christ as He speaks to the Apostles, warning, entreating, instructing, pleading with you and with me, in the middle of the 20th century to recognize that it is our responsibility to heed what we have read and seen. For either we are going to become the kind of Christians the Lord Jesus died to make possible, and has shown us in His Word we can be, or our candlestick will be removed, and our place will be given to others more worthy than are we. Paul looked at them and he said, And the great grief I have in leaving you is that I shall see your face no more.

And they fell upon him. They buried their faces against his cheek. And sorrowed with him. But I think I see another sorrowing here. I think I see the Lord Jesus as He looks upon you and me, for I put myself with you, as we face our generation and are willing simply to fill out our days rather than to use them valiantly and nobly for the Lord Jesus Christ. It costs to serve Christ. It cost Paul, and it is going to cost you. Oh, that somehow into our hearts may come tonight such a holy resolve and purpose that our lives shall count for the eternal glory of Christ to have an abundant entrance, and to hear Him say in that day, You have done what you could.

That is all He is going to ask, nothing more. Paul left the church at Ephesus. The Lord Jesus Christ is yearningly seeking to press upon our hearts tonight the message that He gave to that people as he took leave of them. May it be that we hear it, that we receive it, that we accept it, and realize that this is a living word, not just a history lesson. But it is God's Word to our hearts tonight. Let us bow in prayer. Our Heavenly Father, what days of privilege, what days of opportunity, what days of freedom that Thou hast afforded us.

One day, Father, we are going to stand before Thee and give an account of what we have done with the heritage of Truth. O Father, how easy it is just to go on in the patterns of the past, just to go on somehow, just to survive, just to let one day join itself to the next, and hours link themselves to each other until they form years with vague memories of something that passed, and nothing for the eternal glory of Christ. Come upon us. Spirit of the living God, fall upon us, until into every heart there shall come a passionate purpose that our lives shall be lived, not just endured, We won't just exist, that we will live in the Spirit, and by the Spirit, and in the presence of Christ for the glory of Christ.

Father, it is just so easy for us to leave it up to Paul. But there comes a time when Paul leaves, To leave it up to preachers, to leave it up to evangelists, to leave it up to others, and fail to realize that the responsibility rests right with each of us to take the truth we have received, and that has made us debtors, and to fulfill that debt by living that truth and sharing it. Breathe upon us, breathe upon us, Breath of God, until there shall come a Spirit of immediacy into this fellowship, into this congregation, and every deacon, and every elder, every deaconess, every Sunday school teacher shall sense that we are living now in the crisis moment of now.

Oh, that we might live now to the glory of Christ. So much we need to learn. We thank Thee that we have the testimony of the Apostle, Thy servant, to teach us. Now may the Holy Spirit apply it to our hearts and

lives, and show us the kinds of Christians, and witnesses, and servants we ought to be if we are to stand unashamed before Him at His appearing. Should there be those among us who do not know Him, might this be the hour when hearts are opened, and they invite Him in. How glad we are that Thou art here waiting to save, to satisfy; so gather to Thyself this service, and let holy resolve and noble purpose, real commitment to Christ rise in the hearts of each of us.

For His Name's sake. Amen. Let us stand together for the Benediction. Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the Communion, the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be and abide with each of us, now and until Jesus comes again. Amen. * Reference such as: Delivered at The Gospel Tabernacle Church, New York City on Sunday Evening, April 14, 1963 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor. ©PRBTMI 1963

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