

Radiant Church, September 6, 2020
Mike Rydman
The Church We Can Be
Part 2

Acts 20:18-35 is our text for the next several weeks:

And when they came to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. 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.

And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore, be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The church can be marked by humility, not a pyramid scheme for celebrity culture

Acts 20:19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

Chief of sinners (1 Corinthians 1:15)

Least of the apostles (1 Corinthians 15:8-9)

Servants (1 Corinthians 3:5)

Jars of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Refuse to elevate or even differentiate yourself from everyone else (No varsity vs. JV)

Look at your hands

Church can be heartbreaking, especially when things fail, or people break
We only feel heartbreak over the things that matter to us

The church can be Emotionally invested

Paul mentions “tears” a second time in his speech:

Acts 20:31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

Emotionally invested, but it must be for the things that matter...to Jesus

History of the Church: Professionalism in the clergy'/nominalism in the pews

These were the times when purification and reformation were needed

We can easily think of reasons not be personally, emotionally invested

People will let other people down. Friends will no longer attend

People will hurt you

Irrational, unpredictable, unreliable, passive-aggressive

So Paul tells his listeners, “Guard your hearts.” Be alert to when you fail to care

Because no one was more emotionally invested than Jesus, Himself

Can we learn to care enough to even shed tears for our city? For lost people?

Not some nebulous concern, but concern for real faces with real stories

Investing in relationships always comes with risk, but the greatest joys this side of heaven come when we throw our whole selves into relationships

Church can be resilient, even facing the “plots of the Jews”

We aspire to humility, we know how to tear up, but no one looks for

“Trials” in the NT means being put to the test, enduring a hard time, a conflict, a calamity, a struggle

The hardest trials to face? Those that come through other people, especially those within the church who seem more like enemies

Most people who choose to leave a church do so, not because of theological differences, or questions how money is spent, or of missional priority, but because of unreconciled relationships.

When someone departs a church fellowship, they depart as sinful, broken people leaving behind sinful, broken people.

Paul says that the mark of the validity of his ministry to them is that he made it through trials, and carried scars

His reputation was thrashed
His body beaten
Some of his church-plants were sabotaged
And three times groups of people wanted to see him dead
(Most of this done by people who thought they were serving God)

Sometimes we think that when something is going bad for someone, they must be doing something wrong. The ancient religions taught just that

This is why most of us do not currently have any enemies

And this is why we seem to admire pastors and churches that don't seem to have any hardships, or any opposition. Because scars are ugly

So instead of being truthful, we value niceness
Instead of being clear, we value equivocating (saying what we deep down don't mean)
Responding with "we should get together" when we mean "Not"

If we are to be the church we can be, we should all be praying for these 4 things:

Humility
Energy
Accuracy and clarity

As God answers these prayers, what will that look like?

We will more readily stand with those who are going through trials, especially those suffered for the sake of the gospel

We will be willing to pray for others, even for our enemies

We will use God's words, and not replace them with words the culture finds more acceptable