

Acts 20 - John Karmelich

As we get older, one of the most satisfying things we can do in life is pass our values onto others. The professional teachers I know get great joy of seeing others "get it". That idea can apply to teaching our children, grandchildren or even in a work environment. The point is unless we pass our values onto the next generation, we've failed to live as God's called us to live. I bring up this topic as in effect, it is the key point of this chapter. It's about Paul's final missionary journey recorded in this book. This chapter mainly focuses on those he's training as the next generation of disciples. He is doing this while making his "rounds" to say goodbye to churches he started in parts of Turkey and Greece today.

OK John, good for Paul. Many of us teach or raise good children, why do you need to remind us of the obvious to most of us? As we study this chapter notice the intense effort he made. He cared a lot about raising up the next set of leaders. He realized that he's been called to use his life as a witness for Jesus. When God says, "time's up" it's His business not ours! Paul's working his way to Jerusalem here and he is getting warnings about hard times coming. He doesn't appear to care, as he knows it's his job to be a witness for Jesus and whatever happens "happens"! He didn't look for problems. Like all of us, he had to deal with whatever situation he faced the best he could. Obviously God tells each of us that we're to use our lives as a witness for Him. It's a requirement for Christian living! The issue isn't salvation. It's to not waste the most valuable thing God gives us, time! Not all of us are called to "hit the road". Yes, we still have chores to do and earn a living. I'm just saying like Paul we shouldn't waste the time God's given us. I'm positive we're rewarded in heaven based on how we use our time. Even with that said, it should be our motivation to please the one who gave us eternal life in the first place!

OK then, time to give the chapter details: We last left Paul dealing with a riot in a city called Ephesus. The matter was resolved by the city leader announcing in effect, "This riot won't solve anything. If you want to bring charges against anyone, use the court system". What we know is Paul and those traveling with him left town. The Ephesus church flourished despite the effort to end it. It's implied and verified by historians. With all that said, Chapter 20 opens in effect with "the riot being over" and Paul and his companions moved on. Since Christianity was an officially accepted religion in the empire (as a "sect" of Judaism) the town leaders in Ephesus accepted that that Christian church existed even though it was bad for their false-god statue business! It got resolved by announcing in effect, "Everyone can worship what they want" as long as there's no violence and everyone pay their taxes. With that settled, Paul and those he traveled with moved on.

All of that leads to Chapter 20. Instead of traveling home toward his base of operations (a city in what is today Turkey), Paul and his gang decide to head back to Greece. What drove him was besides telling others about Jesus, was he wanted to check on churches he planted to see how they were doing. So he went through the region of Galatia (it's a region, not a city). There he encouraged the believers through that trip. He then worked his way back into Greece to check on those disciples. Then, he got attacked by some (non-Christian) Jewish leaders. These guys fought Paul as he was hitting them in the "wallet". All of this is the first three verses of a 38-verse chapter. We read of about seven young men (including Timothy) who were from that area traveling with Paul. All of this was his way of encouraging the next generation. They walked as they traveled with Paul. We get a mention of the author (Luke) in Verse 6 as he caught up with Paul in the city of Philippi. Luke then traveled by ship to Galatia, but Paul took a longer land only route to walk with the young men and teach them while they traveled.

The story then changes to tell the story of how a young man was raised from the dead. This was when Paul held a bible study in a three-story home. Picture a large open central area in this house so those on

the upper level could hear what was said. An older boy fell from the 3rd level while Paul spoke. That boy died (Luke, a doctor said so). Paul laid over him like Elijah (an Old Testament prophet) did. No it doesn't mean we can raise someone from the dead when we want to. God allowed this specific miracle to show those in that audience that Paul was "God sent". Remember that those who traveled with Paul were with him so it validated miracle as a sign that God is working through them.

After that Paul was walking again. He avoided a ship option and again chose to walk a longer route as to continue to train the younger men while walking. Luke who did sail, caught up with Paul and all of them traveled together at that point as Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for the next major holiday. (This is about Paul wanting a large crowd so he could preach Jesus some more.) Anyway, the ship stopped at the major city of Ephesus, where Paul spent a few years preaching (see last chapter). He wanted this to be a quick stop as again, he was focused on getting to Jerusalem in time for a major religious holiday.

Realize that half the chapter is in effect Paul giving a speech to the elders in Ephesus. He stated what I love, that Paul hasn't failed from preaching "the whole counsel of God" which in effect is all the things the bible teaches. (Now that I've taught every verse in the bible, I have accomplished that goal. It's just something God called me to do not all Christians! I'm far from perfect, but I did as ordered!) Anyway, it's one reason why he didn't want to hang around the big city of Ephesus again, as he believed that his job was done there and it was time for him to move on. He also warned them that false teachers would raise their "ugly head" after he left. Let me explain that quickly:

If Satan can't take away our salvation, what's his motivation to attack believers? Remember his goal, to delay as long as possible the return of Jesus. Satan realizes his eternal time is short given that fact he'll spend eternity in hell. To delay that, he wants to make us a bad witness for Jesus. That's why he works so hard to make Christians ineffective witnesses. That's why Paul could say with certainty that after he left Ephesus problems will occur! The way we fight forces we can't see is by having a daily reading of the bible and using our lives for Jesus. Resistance comes, but God is more powerful and will win!

Anyway, Paul makes a speech to that effect to thank them for the time he was there, to teach them how to continue to be a good witness for Jesus, to warn them of the dangers to come and to say goodbye as he works his way to Jerusalem which will be a big topic of the next few chapters.

In the meantime, the underlying lesson for us to use our time the best we can. We can either be on the winning team or waste the greatest resource He gave us, our time! Now that I've scared everyone half to death, don't panic. Just use your time wisely as that's why we're created. That also includes helping the next generation be a good witness for Jesus as well! OK, that's enough for one week.

With that said, on the same page where you downloaded this summary is a more detailed lesson on this chapter. That one is on a verse-by-verse basis. To read that, click on one of the other two links on this chapter. If you want, you are always welcome to e-mail me and I hope you like this. Thanks, John