

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

For the Love of the Church, Part 1

Scripture: Acts 20:1-2

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Turning your Bibles to the 20th chapter of Acts, and we're looking at verses 1 to 17. You know I read this over for about three hours. When I first started this sermon, I said, Lord, what am I going to say about this passage? There's no doctrine here. There's no theological statement of any kind. There's not even an application of anything. And so I thought well I'll just cover all 17 verses in kind of a narrative fashion.

But finally after several hours of just going over this, I began to catch in this. The love of the apostle Paul for the church. And the thought came to me that this really in just a very simple narrative passage kind of exploded on my mind how much the apostle loved the church. So I entitled the message For the Love of the Church. In Ephesians chapter 5, verse 25 to 27, Paul wrote these words. "Husbands, love your wives. Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word that He might present it to Himself, a glorious church, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But that it should be holy and without blemish."

Paul said, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it." Peter says, "That we were redeemed not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus Christ." He loved the church and gave himself for it. And I thought to myself, if Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it, redemptively, Paul loved the church and gave himself for it in terms of service.

Paul loved the church. And by that I don't mean the institution, I mean the people who are the church. He loved the saints, with all of his heart, he loved the saints. He lived for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of the saints. He existed from the time of his conversion until his execution in a good kind of love triangle. Passionately in love with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the saints. And I saw that just leap off this particular page in this passage as I began to see the activities of Paul in this little historical narrative. A really a little lesson in geography. And yet expressing something of the depth of the love of the Apostle.

His whole life was a great love affair with the church. And you know you get this as you begin to study the apostle. You get this from almost every angle of his life. The man saw himself first of all as totally expendable for the sake of other people, didn't he? If I be offered, he said to the Philippians, "On the

sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice." In other words, if I give my life in your behalf, what joy that is. To see people saved, to see the elected enter into the fold. To see Christians come to maturity and be disciplined to holiness. This was his life. And the passion overflows over and over again. To the Roman church he said this, I long to see you. Why? That I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you might be established.

To the Corinthian church he said, "Oh, let us cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of the flesh and spirit perfecting holiness and the fear of God." His heart was just kind of broken in 1 Corinthians, that was 2 Corinthians, but in 1 Corinthians it was broken over the sinfulness of the church and he pled with him, saying what know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Which you have of God, you're not your own, you're bought with a price.

So the Galatian church you remember what he said. Oh, foolish Galatians, who bewitched you? Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit you made perfect in the flesh? And he was so distressed through Galatians because some of them had defected. So the Ephesian church, remember his prayer, he said, "I bow my knee to the Father and I pray that you might be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. That you might be mighty." Anyone ought to say that you might know the love of Christ. That you might be filled with all the fullness of God. That you might be able to express that fantastic power that's in you that enables you to do exceeding abundantly above all, you can ask or think to the Philippian church he expressed the same thing. To the Colossian church, you remember the great statement in chapter 1, verse 9 where he says, "For this cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you."

And, and I love this, "to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you might walk worthy of the Lord." In all pleasing. Being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. The desire of this life was to see the saints mature. To the Thessalonians church he said in the 2nd chapter, verse 9, "you remember brother our labor and prevail for laboring night and day because we would not be chargeable unto any of you we preached unto you the gospel of God. You were witness and God also how holy and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believed."

Now listen, "as you know how we exhorted and encouraged and charged every one of you as a father doth his children that you should walk worthy of God." This was his passion. He loved the church. Because he loved Christ. And I think it rose out of 1 John. Chapter 5, verse 1, principle. Where it says there, "that whoever loves God, loves whom God begets." Remember that verse? And if I really love the Lord Jesus Christ, I'm going to love the church that is His. If you have trouble loving the brothers, then you're having trouble loving the Savior. Because they're all His. He has a going love affair with every believer. If you've got a problem, your problem is loving Him.

Paul didn't have that problem. He loved the church. And was willing to give himself for it. Not in redemption, but in terms of service. For the sake of the church, you remember what he endured. Look for just a minute, review for you. The 2 Corinthians 11:23. And just be reminded in your minds in the context of this particular study this morning of what Paul went through for the love of the church. Contrast this sometimes with our own indifference. Sometimes it's a real obligation for us to just roll out of the sack, get ourselves taken care of enough to get here. Let alone to have this kind of love for the church.

But look at verse 23. "Are they ministers of Christ? I am more. In labors more abundant, stripes above measure, prisons more frequently, deaths often of the Jews five times received thy 40 stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods. Once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck and night and day I been in the deep. And journeying's offering perils of water, perils of robbers, perils by my own countrymen, that is the Jews. Perils by the Gentiles, perils in the city, perils in the wilderness perils in the sea, and perils among false brethren, weariness, painfulness, in watching often in hungered thirst and fastings often cold and nakedness."

Now what staggers me is this all Paul went through and he was a believer in total grace. This sounds like a guy trying to earn his way to heaven, doesn't it? This sounds like some kind of masochism. Or certainly some kind of legalism. But this is the outpour of a man who was totally aware that everything he had, he had by the grace of God. And he did it out of love. He did it out of love. But on top of all of that stuff, the thing that really got to him was verse 28. Besides those things that are without. All those externals are somewhat incidental.

"That which cometh upon me daily" here it comes, "the care of all the churches." Paul loved the church. He cared for the church. It wasn't a responsibility someone gave him; it was just in his heart. Nobody put him in charge of a church; he just went and started them. And the care was built in. The greatest griefs that Paul gained in his life were not those that came from being beaten. Or being shipwrecked, or being stoned. The greatest griefs were those defections in the church. And when sin came to the church, what tore his heart up was the situation in Corinth. Do you know that he was so distressed over the situation in Corinth that when he left Ephesus as we shall see in a few minutes, he was in such anxiety that he was torn up on the inside.

And he got to Troas and he was so anxious for Titus to come to report about Corinth, that he couldn't even stay in Troas and keep preaching. He crossed over to Macedonia just anxiously waiting for Titus and when he finally met Titus and Titus said, hey, everything in Corinth is great, he just gave a great big sigh of relief. And the burden was lifted. He was so caring about his churches that the greatest pain he ever knew was the pain of the love for the church.

And when a church was in sin, it tore him up. I think about the Galatians. He wrote to the Galatians, almost in the state of panic. The Greek construction of the book of Galatians is unbelievably difficult

because Paul just running off in all directions speaking emotionally. And then I think of the statement that he made, you remember it. That he made when he said, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." That's what hurt him most.

In fact what John Mark did to him, he never really recovered for a long time. Remember John Mark forsook him and the next time Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along, Paul was still so distressed over that that he didn't let him go. It was that that tore him up because his love was the church. And the pain that he suffered himself, he said, I count all these things as nothing. These are nothing to me. But what was something to him was the church. He loved the saints. And he loved to see them mature and grow. And he spent his life unloading that love on them. Listen to 1 Corinthians 4:11. And I'll read you a few verses. You can follow if you want. 1 Corinthians 4:11. Incidentally he wrote 1 Corinthians right about the time we're speaking of, so this is up to date. "We both hunger and thirst our naked buffeted and have no certain dwelling place. And we labor working with our own hands, he still was earning his own living. Being reviled we blessed, being persecuted we endure it." Boy he was a patient man, wasn't he?

"Being defamed, we intrigued; we are made as the filth of the world and the off scouring of all things under this day." Now I love this. He says, "I've been going through all this." He says, "I write these things not to shame you but as my beloved sons I warn you. For thou you have 10,000 instructors in Christ, yet you have not many fathers for in Christ Jesus I've begotten you through the gospel wherefore I'm on my knees begging." Is what it means.

"Be followers of me." You know this man was totally consumed with the responsibility to make disciples out of those people. He says, you know what I've been through for your sake? Just remember that. You have a lot of teachers; you only have one Father. Please don't forsake me. Please. "And for this cause," verse 17, "I sent Timothy who's my beloved son and faithful in the Lord who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which are in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church. For I'm sending Timothy just so he can make sure you're still following in my way." You say well is he supposed to be the example? He said elsewhere, "be followers of me as I am of Christ."

But here is the heart of the man. He loved the Church. I don't read anytime in the suffering of the Apostle Paul. About his emotional reactions being anything other than faith and joy. What did he do in Philippi when he was in stocks in the inner jail? Sang. Other occasions when he was in difficult situations, he just trusted God. You say, didn't he ever cry? Yeah, he cried a lot. He cried all the time. He wept over and over again. You say, what did he cry about? I'll show you what he cried about. Acts 20:19.

"Serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears and trials which befell me by lying in wait of the Jews." Tears Paul. What do you mean tears? I understand the trials from the Jews, but where did the tears come in? Go to verse 31, same chapter. "Therefore watch and remember that for

the space of three years, I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears." You know where the tears came? And I'm not making an absolutely exclusive statement. But the dominance of tears came in the life of Paul, not through his physical pain, but through the anxiety of teaching the saints.

He taught with tears. That's right. That was the thing that just tore his heart. He had this desire as expressed in Colossians 1:28. "Whom we preach warning every man and teaching every man and all wisdom that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus for this I also labor. The desire to present the church complete and mature." And he couldn't teach without tears. And you remember when he left Ephesus as we shall see in a few weeks, he said to them, "the thing that hurts me most is I know that when I leave, grievous wolves shall enter and not sparing the flock and of your own selves, false teachers shall arise."

Oh, he said, "I commend you to the Word of His grace which I taught you for three years with tears." He loved the church. I believe that you can tell a person who really loves the Lord Jesus Christ by the love they have for His people, for the church. And by that I again say I don't mean the institution I mean the saints who make up the church. Now the passage today opens this concept up. That was just introduction. Go to chapter 20. And the passage opens up to us. I think some just simple little insights into Paul's love.

You know I really believe this and I told you this before that two things make a great church, a great teacher, a great Christian. Love and sound doctrine, right? The perfect combination. And here was a man who had such great doctrine, but he was a man who had such love. He was so believable; he was so human. He was so real. That you couldn't resist the man's doctrine because you couldn't resist the man, you know? Love. And in this simple little narrative and we started in that early service and got all tangled up in verses 1 and 2 and never got any further. Just talking about his love. And I grant you, we're going to be preaching between those words and it's kind of in the space his preaching.

But I want you to look at verse 1 and 2. Let me just read them to you. And then we'll talk about them. "After the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples embraced them and departed them to go to Macedonia. And when he had gone over those parts and given them much exhortation, he came into Greece." Now that didn't bless your life, I know, there isn't a whole lot of stuff in there that you just want to run out and say praise the Lord, alleluia, I'm fed. But so we'll try to stick some things in the white spaces and see what we come up with.

So the apostle Paul, this simple little statement here just kind of opens the crack in the door to begin to see his love. Here's a man who lived and died for the church because he loved the Christ who bought the Church. Now I had six things on the outline and we covered oh I don't know a couple of three of them. Let's look at beginningly at his affection. First of all his affection. His love was seen in his affection. His love for the church. And I don't want to make a point where there isn't any point. And

I don't want to use this as a pretext, but just to take a simple thought out of here and kind of bounce off of it.

I believe beginning in the chapter you can see the love of Paul in his affection. Verse 1. "After the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples and embraced them." Stop there. Now you know what the uproar was, don't you? It was the riot in Ephesus. You remember Paul had such a great ministry in Ephesus and it was probably at that time that the other six churches of Asia Minor mentioned in the book of Revelation were also founded. But he had such a great ministry there that idolatry was going downhill.

And the silversmiths who made the little idols for Artemus were really getting uptight because they were losing out on money. Business was dropping off. And we talked last time didn't we about how Christianity affected Ephesus economically as well as politically, socially and religiously. And so there was a tremendous economic drop in the silversmith's guild got together and said we got to stop this guy and a riot ensued. And they all stood in the theater there for two hours screaming at the top of their voice, "Great Artemus of the Ephesians." And finally the whole thing was quieted down by the town clerk and all this.

But there was still kind of a fomenting anti-Paul, anti-Christian thing there in Ephesus. And so the uproar, that's interesting words too, the word uproar is the same word used in Matthew 27:24. Same Greek word to describe the tumult that occurred at Pilate's trial of Jesus. So it was that same kind of uncontrollable hysterical mob. Well after the uproar was ceased, Paul then calls the disciples to him and embraces them. And I just want to use that word embraced to set some thoughts in your mind.

Now the word embrace refers literally means to draw to oneself. That's what it means. To clasp and pull toward oneself. So it's an intimate word in that sense. But it was used to refer to greetings that were customary among eastern people. In fact very customary even yet today. And in fact they go back as far as you can find people giving each other embraces and kisses as early as Genesis 48:10. And also in 2 Samuel I know it's chapter 19 verse 39. There are other passages in the Old Testament where you have that. So it's a long time custom. In fact there are places where it's still done in the world apart from the east. When I was just in Mexico, everywhere we went, there was all this hugging and kissing everybody on the cheek which is different.

And anyway, but anyway it was good. It breaks down barriers. It really does. It was fantastic. After we play a baseball game, we'd run across and we all had Bibles and we'd give, like I'd give the Bible to the other team's shortstop since I played shortstop. And then I'd embrace him and we'd exchange a hug and put our cheeks to each other's cheek. You know it just all of a sudden stripped down all the barriers. And we just stand there and grin because he couldn't speak English and I couldn't speak Spanish. And I'd say, "Would you come over and help me?" I'm trying to say something to this fellow.

But here was this kind of demonstration of affection. And I think there's something to be said for that. I think we tend to live in our culture in a world that is afraid to do that. We've got all these little barriers that we have. All these little hang-ups. A guy came to see me the other day and after we had cheered and I prayed with him, we had such a good time at fellowship. He said, "You wouldn't mind if I embraced you before I leave, would you?" And I said, "No." And he just gave me a great big hug and I thought to myself, a real expression of honest love is somebody that I had had a ministry in his life.

And there ought to be that kind of thing more in our culture. And I'm not trying to send you all out to start hugging each other. Don't feel guilty if you can't do it, don't feel inhibited if you enjoy it. But let me hasten to say this. I think it would be fair to say that from all we know biblically and from all we know historically and especially from a very clear statement in the third century apostolic constitution, it was only permitted for men to do it to men and women to do it to women. So sorry about that.

Now the concept of embracing then is it was a cultural thing. It existed for a long time in that particular culture. In fact just a very interesting insight, Luke 10, he told them, "don't greet people along the way." Remember that statement. "Don't greet people." You say, well that's a strange statement? Why would he say that? Because an unhurried greeting was customarily what was done. And if you stopped to talk to a group before you got away you'd have to go through the whole group and hug each other and if you had to do that all the way along the journey, you'd never get there.

And it wasn't a matter of saying hi on the way. Those people stopped and had long greetings. In fact it was very customary that when you stayed with somebody and you left that place that the people you stayed with would accompany you on your journey for even as much a day or more than a day. And then they would turn and go back home after they followed you along for a while. I mean saying goodbye and all of that was very demonstrative. Now this kind of embrace usually included just a simple kiss on the cheek.

This is described in the Greek word Philama. Philama from Phileto which is a kind of friendship love and it means a kiss of friendship. It was a kind of kiss you would give, a kind of embrace you would give to a relative or to one who was a very dear friend. It is used in the New Testament several occasions; I think there are at least five or six occasions in the New Testament where you have the statement greet one another with what? A holy kiss.

And that is the same kind of thing. And it's the word philama; it's a kiss of friendship. Now I can't make a big case for Paul's affection out of the word embrace, because it just isn't that's just a customary thing. But I think there was more to it than that. And I want to point that out. There's another word. There's another Greek word that is used for this and it's cata phileo. So what you have in cata phileo is this meaning. To kiss fervently and to kiss affectionately.

It's just a more intense word than philama. And in fact this is the word that is used by both Matthew and Mark to describe the kiss of Judas. Where Judas just really poured it on to Jesus. That's interesting for two reasons. It's interesting because of the measure of his hypocrisy. But two it's also interesting because it shows me that that was perhaps a very normal way to treat Jesus. That Jesus willingly and usually accepted such treatment which tells me something about the demonstrated affection of Jesus.

But nevertheless that was the word that was used. It was also the word that is used to describe the embrace and the kiss of the prodigal who came home and embraced his father. You know where it says "and his father fell on his neck and kissed him." It's *cata phileo*; he fervently and affectionately kept on kissing him. Tremendous demonstration of love reduced to real physical affection. And wasn't that such a test of how much you really love somebody.

That's used elsewhere. Let me show you. Turn to Luke 7. This is such a beautiful story. Jesus was in a Pharisee's house. And He went to the Pharisee's house to eat, verse 36, "sat down" of course this is what He got criticized for. Hanging around sinners. Verse 37. "I behold a woman in the city who was a sinner." So here he was at a Pharisee's house and a sinner showed up. Oh, terrible. What's so big about that? All women are sinners. Well that's true, so are all men, right? When I hate to say that. But this is a sinner of sinners kind of sinner.

This is undoubtedly a harlot. "And when she knew Jesus was eating in the Pharisee's house, she brought out an alabaster box of ointment. Stood at his feet behind Him weeping and began to wash His feet with tears and then wiped them with the hair of her head and *cata phileo* kept on affectionately and fervently kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment."

You say what's all this about? Well the Pharisee thought she was trying to seduce Him. See in the next verse the Pharisee says, "This man if he were a prophet would know what manner of woman this was." See. What was she really doing? She was a woman who had heard probably that Jesus could forgive sin, make a new creature. And she came to Him with the best she had to offer and fervently poured out her love and affection.

Jesus turned to the Pharisee named Simon and said; I have something to say to you. He said, "teacher, say it. It was a certain moneylender had two debtors, the one owed him 500 denarii and the other 50 when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave both. 'Tell me therefore which of them will love him most?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose that he that whom he forgave most.' And he said unto him, 'thou has rightly judged.' Turned to the woman and said unto Simon, 'see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for my feet. But she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.'"

Do you think Jesus appreciated that? Sure He did. And He wasn't any plastic God distant from people. You say what about when He said touch Me not; touch Me not to Mary. Well you have to know the Greek, what He was saying, was don't hang on to Me Mary; I got to ascend. In other words, I can't stay, I've got to go and I'll be back is what He was saying. He wasn't talking about don't lay your hand on Me. She was hanging on. I didn't recognize that that was so funny. I don't know. No, the Jesus He accepted that affection. In fact do you know what He did? He gives a mild rebuke to Simon for not kissing Him, isn't that interesting?

You know it's so easy sometimes for people in places of spiritual leadership to become very aloof from people, very standoffish. Like some great god set apart by some wall. That nobody can touch. That isn't true of Jesus. It wasn't true of Paul. The woman kept on kissing Him and Jesus just put her as an example of what should have been done. He says, "You didn't wash My feet, You didn't kiss me." And then He said to her, well verse 47 you have to get this part. "Wherefore I say unto thee her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much to whom little is forgiven the same love's little. He said unto her, 'thy sins are forgiven.'" Beautiful thing. Beautiful thing.

Look then again at the use of this word *cata phileo*, oh one place more and that is in Acts 20:37 and here's the point I want to make regarding Paul. Acts 20:37. "Paul left Ephesus" in chapter 20 verse 1, but by verse 37, he's back there again. And he's leaving again. And here you get a little more detailed description of the kind of embracing that went on. Look. 36 says, "and when he had thus spoken, he knelt down and prayed with them all." I love this. "And they all wept much and fell on Paul's neck and *cata phileo*, kept on fervently and affectionately kissing Him."

You say, well what do you like about that? I like the fact that they felt that they could do that. I just like the fact that they knew that he loved them. You are hesitant to give a demonstration of your affection to somebody you're not sure has that affection for you. They fell all over his neck and fervently kissed Him and cried. They knew he loved them. I believe there was a physical demonstration of the love of Paul from time to time among those people.

Even to the area of embracing them. And I think it's a beautiful thing that they knew that. You know Jesus was like that. If anybody could have been standoffish, He could have. But He never was. And I just pull one illustration out of the gospel of John that just is so beautiful. In John 13, the apostle John writing, never calls himself by his own name, he always assigns some phrase to describe himself. But in John 13:23, he says this. I like this. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples whom Jesus loved." Don't you like that?

You say John that is a little much; you're a grown man. What are you doing lying on Jesus' chest over there see? You know John must have felt comfortable there. Now you can explain it away and say, well that meant that his particular couch was near Jesus couch, but I think the point here is that John

was demonstrating a physical manifestation of his affection for Christ and Christ received it. Christ didn't say, get up John, get up, what are you doing? And just to show you how John enjoyed this, the next verse, Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom He spoke. Jesus had announced there was a betrayer, so Simon says, John was the nearest one leaning on Christ's chest. And so Peter says to Him, ask.

And then in verse 25, he then lying on Jesus' breast. Yes John, we know that, you already said that. He says it again. See, why does he say it again? Because it's a thrill. Over in John 21, look at this, verse 20. And here's John again, he wants to describe himself. He says, "Peter turning about seized the disciple whom Jesus loved following. You know the one who leaned on His breast at supper." That just amazes me, see. He was so excited about that kind of a physical demonstration of affection that thrilled Him. I love to see the humanness of Jesus, don't you?

I don't know, sometimes I think if I were there, I would want to do the same thing. I'd want to hold his hand or I'd want to sit next to him, wouldn't you? And I'm glad to know that he can respond to that kind of affection. I'm glad to know that Paul is not a plastic walking robot. That he's not sort of a manufactured Bible commentary, you push the button and you get a verse you know. Explain to you. I'm glad he's not a tape recording. I'm glad he's a living breathing person that somebody could fall on and cry on and kiss. There's something about that that tells me that he really loved those people because they did that, they knew he loved them.

That speaks of his love I think. Well I don't want to belabor the point. But Acts 20 tells me that Paul loved the church because of his affection. Secondly he loved the church because of his giving. Isn't that one of the greatest ways to measure love? Giving? What did Paul say in Corinthians? 1 Corinthians, verse 13. "Love seeks not" What? "It's own." Doesn't seek its own, it always gives. Well look at verse 1 and 2 here. And the uproar was ceased, Paul called the disciples and he was here in Ephesus still and this is the greetings of the Ephesus Christians. "And then he embraced them and departed to go to Macedonia."

And incidentally went by way of Troas which was north and he had to go from Troas to Philippi across, so he went from Ephesus which was south up to Troas where he was going to cross over. And then he was going to go to Macedonia. Verse 2. "And when he had gone over these parts." And we'll stop there. So he took a trip north of Troas across and over into Macedonia where the church is a Philippi, Achaia, and Thessalonica existed. Now the thing that's important here is that you say that doesn't say anything to me about giving. Well it does to me. You say why? Because why he went.

Do you remember what I told you last week? Why did Paul want to go to Macedonia? Because he was gathering a collection of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Now back in chapter 19, verse 21, he said when he was still in Ephesus, he purposed in the spirit or in his own mind, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, and Achaia was the province in which Corinth existed, also

called Greece. He was going to go to Macedonia, Achaia and then to Jerusalem and then from Jerusalem to Rome.

So his plan was to go to Macedonia and the riot had come and everything was kind of closing up there and so he saw the time was to leave. Now his purpose in leaving was to gather this collection. Now let me just talk about that for a minute. Turn to 1 Corinthians 16. Before he left Ephesus, he had written 1 Corinthians. And in it he expresses something of the reason he's coming to Macedonia.

Verse 1 of 1 Corinthians 16, "now concerning the collection for the saints as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye." Now he says to the Corinthians and the Corinthians were you had to go through Macedonia to get to Corinth there. So he writes ahead to the Corinthians and says, "Now I told the Galatians to get their offering together. Now I'm writing you to remind you to get yours" And he had told them this before. And he said, in fact he says, "I'll come to you" verse 5 "when I go through Macedonia." So in Ephesus, he writes the letter, says, "I'm going through Macedonia and I'm going to come to you and collect this money." And his purpose in going through Macedonia was also to collect the money.

This was his desire. He wanted to gather this money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. And he had two reasons. Well maybe he had three reasons. One he was a man of integrity. And you remember that we studied in Galatians 2 that when he finally got to Jerusalem, after his apostleship had already begun, he finally met the Jerusalem leaders, they approved of him remember, they sent him out and said, you're the man, do God's work. We only ask one favor. And that is that you remember the poor of Jerusalem. Remember that statement. Galatians 2:10. And he said that will I do. So he's a man of integrity.

One of the reasons he wants to collect the offering is to establish in their eyes the honesty of his own word. But secondly and I think the last two probably are really the salient features for our thoughts here. The fact is that he knew there was a real need there. Those people were poor. In fact in Acts 11 when the famine of Claudius had come along, those people would have died had it not been for Queen Helena who had imported dried figs and dried grapes for the poor people to sustain themselves on. And they were very poor. James 2:5 indicates that they are the poorest of the poor in Jerusalem.

Slum kind of things existed. And so there was a tremendous need and here was an opportunity to express the fulfillment of love toward those in need. And I think that's just characteristic of Paul. He just couldn't resist giving to people who had needs. And here you see his love. And he traipses all over the eastern Mediterranean collecting this money. And he goes from one hot spot to the next knowing the everywhere he goes and everywhere he puts his foot his life is in danger or he doesn't even think about that because he knows he's got an objective to care for somebody else and he's going to get it off and get it done even if it costs him his life.

And you remember what happened to him? All the time he's taking this collection to Jerusalem, throughout the whole trip, everybody's telling him, Paul, you're going to get it. Everybody warned him, everybody said in the 20th chapter we'll get to it in a couple of weeks. They kept warning him, all along the way, all along the way, Paul, you're going to be in trouble. Paul, you're going to get it. You can't go through that territory. And he said, "I didn't consider any of those things none of those things bothered me at all. I was going to Jerusalem and I went."

And you see that was the kind of man he was. He knew there was a need and at all costs to himself he met the need. That's giving, that's love qualified and defined, isn't it. I really love somebody when I sacrifice myself totally for their benefit. That's right. Well I think there was another thing in his mind. He loved the church not only in the sense of caring for their needs, but I think he loved the church in the sense of his unity and he saw this. He saw that the giving of all this money from the Gentile church to the Jewish church in Jerusalem could be a fantastic cementing thing in the unity of the body.

Because there was always that problem of Jew and Gentile, wasn't there? And even when he wrote Romans, remember, to the Romans he spoke about that same problem. And so he had this in his mind that if I could get this offering to those Jerusalem Jews, and incidentally he wasn't going to take it alone, he was going to have representatives from every one of the Gentile areas. They'll see the love of the Gentiles and it'll tie the church together.

And so Paul loved the church. He loved it enough to meet the needs of individuals and he loved it enough to want to see the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus who prayed, "Father I pray that they may be" what? "united." And he didn't care what the cost was to himself, did he? He didn't care. He traipses back and forth, back and forth collecting all this money, gathering this thing, organizing this whole deal on behalf of those people far, far, far away.

Beautiful expression of love. Well look at the rest of these verses in this passage. They're very, very significant. Verse 2. 1 Corinthians 16. He tells them how to get the money together. First day of the week whatever wanted to be laid by him and stores God is prosperative. There be no gatherings when I come. And this is to be done of course as you purpose in your heart before the Lord. But it's interesting that he said I don't want the offering taken when I get there, this is something you ought to plan ahead on.

You're giving beloved ought to be done far in advance that when you arrive here. First day of the week you come together you've already planned it. And when I come whomsoever you should approve by your letters then will I send to bring your liberality the Jerusalem. In other words, whoever of your congregation wants to accompany me by your approval I'll take. And we're going to bring letters of commendation as well as people. And he says and I like verse 4 "be suitable that I go also

they shall go with me." In other words, he's leaving here the loophole that he may not go and the reason is there's not enough money.

He says, "If your offering is sufficient, we'll go. If not I'll be back." And then he says "I'll pass through Macedonia and I'll stay with you for the winter." And then he makes this little statement. "You may bring me on my journey." And that was the kind of thing that I mentioned earlier. That when a person left, they would all go with him for a day or so.

And he says, "I will not see you now by the way." In other words, I don't want to see you in passing; I want to tarry with you. But I'm going to stay in Ephesus verse 8 "Til Pentecost." Originally he was going to stay until Passover and Pentecost came, how many days later? Remember? 50. And so he was going to stay only 'til Passover, but he changed his mind and stayed 'til Pentecost, 50 more days. You say why did he do that? Verse 9. "A great door for effective work was opened to me." There are many adversaries. So he decided to stay and he gets to Jerusalem by Pentecost where he originally wanted to get to Jerusalem by Passover.

So Paul then leaves Ephesus having written this letter to the Corinthians and instructed them about the offering. He goes out from there to collect this money. Now verse 2 of Acts 20, we pick up the story there. When he had gone over those parts and given them much exhortation, he came to Greece. So having this in his mind, he pursues his plan and goes to Macedonia. Now I got to stop here. During these days when he left Ephesus, he goes north to Troas, and over to Macedonia. Somewhere in there from Troas to Macedonia, somewhere either at Troas or Macedonia, in that little area, he writes 2 Corinthians. Well it would be for Macedonia.

Have to be. So by the time he goes to Troas and over to Macedonia, he writes 2 Corinthians. And he really unbears his heart. And I want to show you what he says when he writes back. Remember the first letter which chastised them for their sin? Listen to this. 2 Corinthians 1:8. "For we would not brethren have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia." That's in Asia Minor. "That we were pressed out of measure." Really pushed to the extremities.

"Above strength in so much that we despaired even of life but we had the sentence of death in ourselves." In other words, we knew there was no human resource to prevent death. So we had to trust not in ourselves, but in God. And His resurrection power. In other words, if we even lost our lives, we've had a trust in the resurrection power of God. He really believed God wanted him to get this offering to Jerusalem. And he had actually almost states here that if I die, God will have to raise me so I get this offering there.

He imagined the commitment of that man to give to the needs of others. And so he was really pushed but he had this desire and by the time he gets to Troas, he's despairing for his life. Now in 2 Corinthians 2, it tells us a little more of his anxiety. Verse 12. "Furthermore when I came to Troas to

teach Christ gospel, he stopped and he couldn't go anywhere without teaching for a little while. A door was opened to me of the Lord. He came there and the door opened from the Lord. So he stayed and taught in Troas." But he says, "I had no rest in my spirit." Why? Because I found not Titus my brother. Apparently Titus is supposed to meet him there and Titus was coming from Corinth, you see the Corinthians had received the first letter. And Paul wanted to know how they reacted, right? He wanted to know whether they cleaned up the mess.

And he said, I got there and Titus wasn't there and boy I couldn't handle it. "I had no rest in my spirit. So taking my leave of them, I went from there to Macedonia." He shoots over to Macedonia. You say what happened when he got to Macedonia? He met Titus. You say what did Titus tell him? 2 Corinthians 7:5. This is so good. He says, "For when we were coming to Macedonia, our flesh had no rest. He's still really torn up. We were troubled on every side without we had fightings, but within we had fears." Oh the fear of the anxiety that came over the fact of the Corinthian problems.

Verse 6. "Nevertheless, God who comforts those who are cast down comforted us by the coming of" whom? "Titus." And Titus came with the news about the Corinthians and oh he wanted to know, listen to verse 7. "And not by his coming only, but by the consolation with which he was comforted in you when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your ferment mind toward me so that I rejoiced the more." You know what they did? They got the whole letter, they believed it and they repented and got straightened out. You think that made him happy? That's what he lived for.

And he says, "for though I made you sorry with a letter, I don't repent though I did repent." In other words he's saying I know that was a hard letter, but I'm not sorry, but for a while I was. Maybe a little too harsh. Oh, for I perceive the same epistle has made you sorry. Even if it were for a little while. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry but that you sorrowed to repentance for you were made sorry after a godly manner. Isn't that good?

He was so excited about what had been accomplished in their lives. Well, in 2 Corinthians which was written there for Macedonia, he reminds them again after all this oh, I'm so thrilled. He says, "Now about the offering" chapter 8, verse 1. He reminds them to give toward the poor saints of Jerusalem and that goes through chapter 8 and chapter 9. And he sent Timothy with the letter. Well, all of that just to say this. Here is the apostle Paul. Weary, tired, anxious over the spiritual life of his churches. Pursued his life threatened, recognizing at any time that he could die and he has no physical power to restrain that.

Totally cast upon the power of God and yet he doesn't ask one thing for himself. All he wants to do is get the money together to give to the needy saints that the church might be one. Now this is a giving man, isn't it? This is the measure of the love of the man. The church to him was not a means for his own promotion. The church to him was just simply the beloved of Christ whom he loved. And on whom he spent himself.

Let me give you a third thing in closing just a few minutes. A third thing in Acts 20 that tells me how much he loved the church is his teaching. His affection, his giving, thirdly, his teaching. Verse 2. "And when he had gone over those parts and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece or Achaia," that's where Corinth church was. But I want you to see this one little thing. He gave them or had given them much exhortation.

This is important and it becomes even more pointedly interesting in the next passage which we'll talk about in two weeks where he preaches this all night sermon. And Eutychus falls asleep and dies because of it. You stand warned. Nevertheless, the apostle Paul has spent his time giving much exhortation. He knows he's on the last legs of his journey in eastern Mediterranean area because he knows that the hostility has really reached a fever pitch and so he knows he's not coming back. I just sensed that in his heart. And he didn't come back. And he's saying goodbye.

And he knows the churches are established and there are elders in the churches now that can teach and he knows that the gospel has had a foothold and he knows that he's not going to be back because of the pressure, but he also knows in his mind he sees Rome and then he sees Spain and so this is it. And he spends himself with much exhortation.

You know here's a time when he could feel sorry for himself and the pressures when he could take a vacation, but instead of that he spends himself continually exhorting. And here's the idea of teaching. Much interaction, much communication, much sharing, much speaking and teaching and exhorting. And incidentally much writing. He has written 2 Corinthians already in these days. The trip to Jerusalem takes on the kind of character of a farewell trip and yet he loses himself in teaching. And here again, just to pull this little thought. Here again is the mark of the man who loves the church.

He spends himself on teaching the church. Paul lived for this reason. To perfect every man. Paul said Apostles and prophets and evangelists and teaching pastors are given to the church to do what? Perfect the saints. He lived for this. To him that's what the church was. You know it's a sad thing to see so many churches today and so many men and ministries and for them the church is a means to a successful career. Or the church is a vehicle for their own ego.

And you know everybody fights that, pride and all. But you know something? Unless a man of God teaches out of love for the Lord Jesus Christ and love for the church, his efforts are ego-centered. I ask God over and over again to help me love the church more, love his people. To spend myself until the dying day to perfect the saints. That's all I want to do. And as I studied through this passage on Paul, I was so convicted in my own life with my lack of love for God's people.

I want to love God's people more. There are so many times I prepare and I'm not even thinking about how this is going to teach God's people, but I'm saying in my mind, boy they're going to like this.

They're going to think I really did a good job on this. And I have to get back to myself and say, that's not a godly thought. And sort of get thee behind me Satan kind of thing. And focus my attention on the fact that the only reason I stand here is not so that you can know what John MacArthur knows, but so you can know what God wants you to know and be fulfilled in all the perfect knowledge of His will.

God gives His love for the church. You know it's amazing to me how some people they can take it or leave it. They call themselves Christians, they can come in and out of church and miss it for a long time, doesn't bother them a bit. That isn't love for the church. If I loved the church, I'll minister to the church. If God gives me a teaching, I'll teach the church until I die. The thought of retirement to me is horrendous. Of course that's because I'm young. But it's horrendous. Retire; stop teaching the believers? You know what the apostle Paul was doing until he got his head chopped off? Read the last two verses in the book of Acts when he was in Rome. He was teaching the things concerning Jesus Christ. Never stopped.

And you know I don't know what your spiritual gifts are. You know, the Spirit knows. You ought to love the church so that the greatest desire of your heart is to minister your gifts. Listen, Jesus bought the church at the price of His own life and the price of His own blood. It's a precious treasure and he's committed into the care of every saint, administered to every other saint, right? Do you love the church? God help us not to see the church as a means to our own gratification. Or as an avenue for entertainment. But to see the church as a ministry that we're to give ourselves too in total love to the sacrificing of our own lives.

So Paul loved the church. And he gave them much teaching. He never stopped. He never rested. He just taught and taught and never stopped. He so tired by the time he gets to Troas again in verse 6 to 12, he must be wiped out after all that's going on and we'll see this next time. He is at the end of his rope. And you know what he does? He teaches them all night long. That's the measure of the man's commitment. You say well maybe when he came down to Greece at the end of verse 2 he got into Corinth there and went to Gaia's house. It says, other passages that he stayed with Gaius, Titus Justice and he said maybe he rested there. No. He had something to do while he was there. Had a little project. He wrote Romans.

Yeah, you say he doesn't give up, does he? No he doesn't. He's never, you know he just he never wanted to get weary in well doing. He taught the church. I talked to some pastors yesterday and I said the measure of your love for Christ is the measure of your love for his people. And the measure of your love for his people is how much you desire their maturity spiritually. That's right. You know if I love my child, what do I want out of him? I want him to be everything he can be, right?

If I love him, true? If I love you, what do I want you to be? Everything you could be spiritually. If you're having trouble with that desire, you're having trouble loving Christ because if you really love Him that

way, you're going to love the church that way. Well let's pray.

Father we thank You for our time this morning. And it's been good to be in the Word and share together. Thank You for the sample of a man again who loved, loved the church, Your church. Lord I don't have any desire to build your church because you said you'd do that. I just want to be a part of it. Just be a stone somewhere in the building. Just minister to others. God give me and give this people a love for the saints. God may we see ourselves as expendable. May we see our lives as nothing, as waste, refuse. Only to be used of the as thou to see fit. May we desire nothing other than to love the church, to express that love in the ministry of our gifts to the saints. Thank You for the ministries, the gifts, the callings that You've given to us. God help us to express that responsibility of love by faithfully ministering.

And oh God we know that the sons will be glorified, people should be saved. We give You the praise for what You accomplish in Jesus' name, Amen.

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