

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

### **For the Love of the Church, Part 3**

Scripture: Acts 20:7-17

Code: 1776

1974

The love of the Christian for the lost. That's certainly one of the areas of responsibility for the Christian's love. The other one has been the study that we've been involved in for three messages, in the 20th chapter of Acts, and that is the Christian's love for the Church. We're called on to love the lost, to love those without the Lord Jesus Christ, to be concerned about them, to care for them, and so we are to love the Church as well.

And in the 20th chapter of Acts, verses 1-17, we have been learning about this from the character of the life of the Apostle Paul. I asked myself the question as I was thinking through this passage for the third time, "What really makes a great minister of Jesus Christ?" And by the word great, I mean effective. What really is it that makes some men stand above the rest? And as the history of the Church goes on, certain names are forgotten and other names are remembered.

What is it about certain people that makes them sort of leave an indelible impress upon society in terms of Christian society, upon the Church? Some would say it's men of great intelligence who have an impact. Some would say men of great knowledge or of great leadership ability, or of great boldness, or of great speaking ability, or of writing ability. And maybe all of those things are a part of it, and individually or in combination find their way into the lives of every effective man. But I really think that behind all of these things, and the one great under-girding fact that makes men stand out in the history of the Church is their love for the Church, and that's based on their love for the Lord Jesus Christ, isn't it?

The real difference, the real key to the effectiveness of people in the Church, is how much they love the Church. And why I suppose one of the most interesting studies is to study great men of the past and to study biographies and autobiographies of great preachers, and you find almost always the common denominator of a tremendous compassion for the saints. A deep, deep love for the Lord Jesus Christ, which radiated itself in a tremendous love for the Church. This is always there.

And the Apostle Paul was such a man who loved the Church. It consumed him. You can remember - you can relate to this maybe in a simple illustration. You can remember when you first fell in love with that girl that's now your wife, if you can still remember that, or you can imagine the tremendous love that you have for your wife right now. You can - if you have to imagine it. Or you can just relate to the

tremendous love you have for your wife, or you can relate to the tremendous love you have toward that one that's just sort of captured your fancy. And you can think through all of the tremendous feelings that you feel within the framework of that love, and you get an idea of how Paul felt about the Church when you magnify that about a thousand times. He loved the Church. With every deep down sense of emotion that you ever feel when you love, he loved the Church. It was his life. It was everything.

Paul wrote some beautiful words that expressed the love that he had for the Church. You know, when we talk about love, we talk about the heart. I love you with all my heart, or my heart is yours. You know, all that kind of stuff we used to say, long ago and far away. But in Philippians 1, the Apostle Paul talks like that, only he doesn't talk like that to a girl. He talks like that to some saints. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always, in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now." He says, "I just pray for you with such joy because of our fellowship, being confident of this very thing that He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, then listen. Even as it is write for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart." Isn't that a beautiful statement? Paul had them in his heart.

What does that mean? That means they dominated his emotions. He was in love with the Philippians. Lest you think it was only the Philippians, listen to what he said to the Corinthians. He said, in 2 Corinthians 3:2, "You are our epistle written in our hearts." And in 7:3, he said, "You are in our hearts to die and live." In other words, living for him was loving the saints.

To the Thessalonian Church, Paul wrote this. "But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother cherishing her babies." You can't imagine anything more gentle than that, can you? And he went on. Listen to these words. "We love you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us." 1 Thessalonians, 2:7-8. We loved you so much that we didn't just preach at you, we gave you our lives.

Jesus put it this way. John 15:13: "Greater love hath no man than this, than that a man," what? "Lay down his life for his friends." Paul did that. Paul gave his life for the love of the Church.

Throughout the history of Christianity, I think that the men who have stood head and shoulders above others, and not just preachers, but anybody, men, women, anybody, have been those who had the deepest, most compassionate love for the saints. And beloved, that's generated by a devout love to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Those are the ones who really made the effect on the Church, and I believe they're still the ones that make the effect on the Church and on the world. Paul loved the Church. That's why he was the man he was.

Now as we look at our passage here in Acts 20:1-17, we have been studying just a simple narrative. And I say just a simple narrative not because it's insignificant, but because it's in contrast to a passage which deals with theology or practical application. It's just simple narrative, is all it is.

But in this narrative, we see the action of Paul that betrays the attitude of Paul. You know, love just isn't something that's spoken. It's something that's demonstrated, isn't it? You can say very little and demonstrate love. You can say a whole lot and demonstrate none of it.

And so here, we don't find a whole lot of verses, "Paul loved the Church, Paul loved the Church, Paul loved the Church." It doesn't say that all. It doesn't even mention the word love in the whole passage. But I'll tell you, this is one of the greatest love chapters I've ever seen. You think 1 Corinthians 13's got a lot of love in it, you ought to see this. And it never says the word love. It just demonstrates it. The first half of the chapter, Paul loves the Church. The second half, the Church loves him back. It's one of the great love chapters.

Now we've seen Paul's love for the Church in several things. He's on his third missionary journey. It's his final little tour around the eastern Mediterranean. He's stopped at every little spot where he's had an effective ministry, and he's met with the saints there and said his farewells and so forth. And now he's back to Jerusalem. This is the end of his third journey, and he feels in his heart it'll be the last time. And so it's a time of goodbyes. And at this time, his love is demonstrated. And we saw it demonstrated in several ways.

First of all, and I'll review just quickly, we saw it demonstrated in his affection, didn't we, in verse 1? It says that, "After the uproar was ceased" - in Ephesus they had a big riot, you remember, over the falling off of the sale of idols when Paul had such an effect on the town that the idols' worship fell off. "After the riot was over, Paul called on them the disciples and embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia." And we said that using the word embraced is kind of a jumping off point. We're looking into the area of showing your love in terms of visible, demonstrated affection. And we saw how affectionate a man the Apostle Paul was. How that he was unencumbered by any sense of dignity or a holier than thou or supreme guru in the Church or whatever. He just was one of the people. He was there, and he was available.

And over in verse 37 of chapter 20, we see how the people fell all over him and kissed him on the neck, and he was just the kind of man who was affectionate, and they felt really at ease in doing that. He wasn't anybody high and lofty and set apart. He was somebody that they could touch and love and show their affection to. And over and over we saw how the New Testament says to greet one another with a holy kiss and be demonstrating your affection.

Then we saw secondly that his love was visible by his giving. Not only his affection, but his giving. Verse 1 at the end says he went to Macedonia and went all through it, verse 2 says. And you

remember why. He was gathering a collection of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem, wasn't he? And we looked into that whole thing and saw the passages in Corinthians that are comparative to this. And we saw that here was a man who absolutely was selfless. His total preoccupation was to minister to the needs of others. He was busy collecting money for others.

You know, it's an old story, but most evangelists who come to town are interested in collecting money for themselves. That's not true of all, but that's true of many. Here was a man who came to town and didn't want to be chargeable to anybody, so immediately when he came to town, he worked and earned his own pay, and collected money for other people. Selfless, giving person.

And you know, this is part of spiritual quality, isn't it? John said, "Don't love in word. Don't love in tongue." 1 John 3:18. "Love in deed and truth." "If you see your brother has need and you shut up your compassion to him, how dwells the love of God in you?"

God demonstrated His love to us when He gave His Son to die on the cross. We ought to be willing to lay down our lives for the brothers, right? 1 John 3:16. And so Paul demonstrated that kind of love. There was a need, and he wanted to meet it. And he scurried all over eastern Mediterranean. He did it. It took him a couple of years to get the thing going, just to collect money for some needy people.

The third thing that demonstrates his love I think is his teaching. Verse 2. "As weary as he was, as spent as he was, as harried as he was, and hassled by the Jews who wanted to kill him," it says in verse 2, "he had given them much exhortation." He traveled all over Macedonia teaching and teaching and teaching. And then when he got to Greece, he wrote the book of Romans, doing more teaching. And I'm sure he taught the saints in Corinth, in Achaia. Here was a man committed to teaching. He didn't just give a little exhortation. He gave what? Much exhortation. Much instruction. Much encouragement. And this I believe shows his love.

And I've said it before, and I think it's true. The mark of the loving ministry is selfless, tireless teaching of the flock. The good shepherd cares for his sheep, and you care for the sheep by feeding and protecting.

In 1 Peter 5:1, we get insights into Peter's view of this, so that you think - lest you think that Paul was the only one. Peter wrote this: "Feed the flock of God which is among you." And he's talking to pastors, elders. "Taking the oversight of it." You feed it and you protect it. You care for it. "Not by constraint, not because you're forced to, not because the job requires it or somebody pushes you, but willingly, and not for money, but of a ready mind." Not for money, but for eagerness, desire.

"And don't be lords over God's heritage. No, no. The way to rule the sheep, the way to lead the sheep, is not to be the lord, not to dominate them, not to browbeat them, not to crush them, but - " I love this. "But be examples to the flock. The way to lead is by example, not threat."

But the key to the whole ministry is to feed and protect. Now this expresses I think the loving heart of the Apostle Paul, weary, worn, spent, persecuted. And yet he stops everywhere he goes and teaches and teaches and teaches. You know, "Why does he do this?" Because the consuming desire in his heart was to bring the saints to maturity, wasn't it? And he had to do it. It compelled him.

The fourth way that we saw his love was his persistence. Verse 3. "He abode three months in Greece -" And I told you he wrote Romans there. "And when the Jews laid wait for him as he was about to sail to Syria, he purposely returned through Macedonia." Now this is a persistent man, folks. He was going to go to Syria to go to the Passover in Jerusalem, to catch the boat, but he found out about a plot, and they were probably going to shove him overboard. And that didn't stop him. That just detoured him.

And so he said, "Well, if that's the way it is, I'll go back through Macedonia." I mean, that is an awfully long way to go. But he was never bothered, and it doesn't give you any idea that he was terribly oppressed and browbeaten. He just took off in the other direction. And if you read further in the chapter, over in 20:19, you find that he even admits, "I've been serving the Lord with all humility and many tears and trials which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews." And in 20:22-24, "Behold, I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the thing that there shall befall me, except that the Holy Spirit keeps telling me in every city that bonds and afflictions await me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life here unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God."

Nothing stopped him. He was absolutely persistent. And you know, when he wrote about love, he wrote about love in those terms. You remember 1 Corinthians 13, remember these phrases? He said this: "Love bears all things." Right? "Love hopes all things. Love endures all things." For the love of the Church, he could bear anything, and in the middle of it, he could hope, and in the middle of it, he could endure. That's the character of persistent love. Love persists. Love is relentless. And we saw his love in his persistence.

And verse 4 tells us some fellows accompanied him along, and they met him there in Troas, verse 5 says. And these were representatives of the Churches that had taken the offerings, so that when he came to Jerusalem, he would give them money, but it would actually be presented to them by representatives of all the Gentile churches. What a beautiful picture of unity that would be for the Jewish Christians, to see the love of the Gentiles and to see the Gentiles in person coming all that way to give them, the needy, the money that they so desperately needed.

We see then, fifthly, and this is where we spend our time this morning. His love is visible in his availability. In his availability. Not only his persistence and his teaching and his giving and his affection, but his availability. And I think this true of love. Don't you? I think whom you really love,

you're available to. You know, that's easy for you to illustrate to yourself. If three or four people demand your time, invariably, if it comes to a decision, you'll usually give the time to the one you love. Hopefully, you will, if you really love them, because you're drawn that way.

Paul loved the Church; thus he was available. It's a simple truth. Now as we look at verses 7-14, we're going to see a lot of different things and a lot of little insights, but overall, just notice the availability of Paul.

Verse 6: "We sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, after Passover and the feast that followed, and came with them -" or "came to them," I should say. That is to the men who were waiting in there. The men listed in verse 4, and some others, incidentally. "Came to them, to Troas, in five days, and stayed there seven days."

So they came across the little sea there and they were in Troas, back on the coast of Asia Minor. And they stayed there for seven days. And of course, the reason they were staying seven days was to await the ship that would take them back to Jerusalem.

Now verse 7: "Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the next day, and continued the speech until midnight." Now let's stop right there, because here we have one of the first accounts of a Christian meeting. This is one of the first. And we can gain some little insights into what the Christians did when they came together, and why they came together, and when they came together, by just looking at that one verse.

First of all, when did they come together? The first day of the week. Now that became the meeting time for the Church. You say, "Didn't they meet every day?" Sure they did. They met, from Acts 2, "Daily, from house to house." And listen. Christianity is not a one day a week thing, is it? It's an everyday thing. And that little church, wherever it was, in whatever little town, those Christians were together usually during the week. There were Bible studies in home. They were breaking bread in homes. They were sharing the Lord's table, perhaps, in home. So it was not uncommon for the Church to meet on a daily basis in its early years.

But together, the church came on the first day of the week. And you say, "Why did they do that?" Well, you go back to John 20, just to refresh your memory. Verse 19. This was immediately after the Resurrection, "The same day, at evening, being the first day of the week." Do you know when the first day of the week started in the Jewish calendar? Saturday night, right? After the sun went down, the Sabbath ended. The days were counted from sunset to sunset. And so it was on Saturday night, literally, but it was the first day of the week. So then it was Sunday.

We don't prefer to call it Sunday. It's all right if you want to call it Sunday, but that represents the sun god. But that's okay, because there is no sun god anyway, so you can call it Sunday without feeling bad. But I prefer to call it the Lord's Day. That's Revelation 1:10. John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." That's why in your bulletin you'll find that we call it the Lord's Day.

Now they met together here in John 20:19 on the first day of the week, and who appeared to them? Jesus did. Eight days later, verse 26 says, "The next time the first day of the week came, they were meeting together, and the Lord appeared." Well, you see what happened? They were together on the first day. That was Resurrection, commemoration day. The Lord appeared both times, so He had risen on the first day, appeared on the first day, appeared again on the first day, and they just took the first day and ran with it. That became Resurrection Day, the Lord's Day.

And so the early Church celebrated its fellowship and its worship and its teaching together on Sunday. And let me hasten to add that I think such meeting together of the Church is strictly important. In Hebrews 10:25 it says, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is, and much the more as you see the day approaching." That means you ought to come together with the believers and not forsake that.

Now notice that it is not the Sabbath Day anymore. Sunday is not the Sabbath. You hear people talk about going to church on the Sabbath. This is not the Sabbath. The Sabbath was yesterday. And the Sabbath is a dead issue, friends.

You know, I was on the radio in Honolulu. They have a talk station, like KABC. It's the number two rated station in Hawaii. And they give three hours Sunday afternoon to a Christian kind of dialogue. And so I was the three-hour answer man on Honolulu radio station, KORL. And it was really interesting just to sit there, you know, and be on the grill with all these people. You know how talk radio goes. You do have that little button, however, you know, that you can just say, "I'm sorry, ma'am." Boing, you know, and it's all over.

But anyway, people called in, and one fellow asked me a question at the very beginning. He said, "What day is the church supposed to meet?" And you know, I didn't realize I was being baited, but I was, apparently, because I went into this long, lengthy answer about the meaning of the Lord's Day and the whole thing and everything. Got all done, and the lines went bananas. And I realized there's a tremendous contingent of Seventh Day Adventists in Honolulu. And all of a sudden, I had opened up Pandora's box, and they couldn't handle the calls, and everything was going, and it was amazing, all the calls that were going on.

Through all of this, I simply maintained, in answering these various questions, that the only way you can allow for the - to worship on Saturday is, one, to ignore the history of the Church; two, to assume that the old covenant is still in vogue; three, to reject the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Well, they didn't

take too kindly to all of those junctions, but I supported them by Scripture. In Colossians 2:16, it says, "Let no man therefore condemn you in food -" That is, if you don't eat like Jewish people used to eat. "In drink, or in respect of a Feast Day," if you don't keep the Passover or the Sabbath, "or of the new moon, or of a Sabbath, which are a shadow of things to come." And once the thing comes, you don't need the shadow anymore. So don't let anybody just you in those things.

So we went on and on about that. It's clear to me that the Lord's Day historically and biblically became the time when the Church met together. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul just assumes it. He says, "When you come together on the first day of the week, that's the time to bring your offerings." Right? The Church should meet on the first day. If you want to meet on the Sabbath and you want to buy the Sabbath, then you're going to have to buy the whole old covenant and you're going to be saved by works, and that's what we got into on the radio.

And I finally just turned the tables and I asked the question, I said, "Well, let me ask you about your doctrine. You've asked me about mine." So I said to some guy who was giving me this long argument, I said, "Why is it that you say that the only covenant people are the ones who worship on the Sabbath, and that the mark of the beast is on everybody who worships on Sunday? That's in your theology." And there was a long silence. And then he admitted that that was true, that the mark of the beast is on those who worship on Sunday. And ultimately, what they were saying was you're saved by works, keeping the whole covenant. Obeying the law. And we got into all kinds of legalism, and it became a tremendous thing because I'm so fresh in Galatians that, you know -

You know, the Lord has a way of just arranging things. Somebody must have thought, "Man, he's got all that stuff down, you know?" That's why it's good to study the Word of God. You know, I've found that in my life. You study a certain passage, and the Lord will give you opportunity to use it.

The Church met then on the Lord's Day, and at the beginning, they met on a daily basis, and pretty soon it became a kind of thing where they would continue to meet in small groups, in homes. But on the time that the Lord's Day came around, the first day of the week, they would congregate together in mass. I don't believe for a minute that the Church is just to be little groups scattered all over town. I think the Church is to come together.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11, he says, "When you come together into one place -" And by saying that, he assumed that they would, didn't he? And in 1 Corinthians 14:23, he said again, "When you all come together in one place, if everybody speaks in tongues, they'll think you're mad." And what he was - what I want to pull out is just the phrase, "When you come together in one place."

The early Church always came together in one place, just like we do on Sunday morning. We go from here, not to dismiss ourselves from other Christians, but to other fellowships, right, through the week?



We meet in homes. We share together in Bible studies. We share together in prayer time. We have all of that, but then we come together for common instruction and common sharing and worship. This is part of the Church.

Now you know, in the New Testament time, and this is another thing we had to talk about on this little discussion on the radio, there were some people, they go on and on and say, "Well, many of the early Jews kept the Sabbath. Many of the early Jews kept the feast. They continued to do it, even after they were saved." That is correct. They did do that. But you know, I've told you before, Judaism died hard, didn't it? Even Paul took a vow, a Jewish vow, after he was a Christian preacher.

But you see, this is what Paul answers in Romans 14, and this is, I think, a very, very conclusive passage. In Romans 14, you've got a church in Rome, some Jews, some Gentiles. Okay? And the Jews are still hung onto the Sabbath. They had reasons. Do you realize that the only day that Jews had off, the only working day that Jew had off - if you worked for a Jewish employer, the only day you had off was the Sabbath. Right? So you had to make due. Pagans had no day off.

So sometimes it was easy for the Jew to be accommodated. He would work then maybe for a Jewish employer. He would have the Sabbath day off. And so in good conscience, he would go to the synagogue, or in good conscience, he would worship Christ on the Sabbath day. With him, it was an honest thing. It was a conscience thing, and he felt the Sabbath was a sacred thing. The Lord said, in effect, "Give him time. Don't hassle him." Remember the passage, Romans 14? If this is your brother's problem, he's a weaker brother, let him grow up. Don't lord your liberty over him.

Roman 14:5. "One man esteems one day above another." Some people still keep the Sabbath, he says. Some Christians. "Another esteems every day the same." Some of you have your liberty. You know all days are equal. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day regards it under the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord doth he not regard it." In other words, as long as you're conscientious, just don't worry about it. But don't do something that's going to make your brother offended. If he is still stumbling along, thinking the Sabbath's important, then don't offend him. And this was written for a Jew.

So there was \_\_\_\_\_ in which God was very tolerant of when they worshipped, but they did worship on the Lord's Day, and that became the norm. Let me add this. On the Lord's Day, there is no instruction in the New Testament as to any regulations for it. You know what has happened in Christianity? Whole years ago - I don't know how it happened - but somebody dragged all of the - all of the conglomeration of stuff from the Sabbath and imposed it on the Lord's Day. When I was a little kid growing up in Philadelphia, on Sunday, you couldn't do anything. I mean, you had to sit there. You couldn't read the paper. You couldn't go out and play catch. You sat there in that Little Lord Fauntleroy suit all day, just sitting there, like this. So why did they make you do that? Who knows?

But somehow all of the Sabbath rigmarole got hauled over and imposed on the Lord's Day. You can't find it in the New Testament. Now I do think, though, that you ought to have a balance about the Lord's Day. It's good to take a rest when God provides you a rest. It's also good to have some of the time in the afternoon between two studies of the Word of God when you apply yourself diligently to the application of that information and you prepare your heart. I think that it's a great day for spiritual restoration, although I certainly have nothing against you taking a bike ride or doing something like that, as people in the past have always said was so evil on the Sabbath. It is not the Sabbath. It's the Lord's Day, and every day is His day in a sense, but we come together on this first day.

Now where did the Early Church meet? Well, look here. It says in verse 8 they met in an upper chamber. They met everywhere. First, they met in the temple, didn't they? And you imagine how popular that was. Boy, that must have been interesting. And then after that, they started meeting in synagogues. You know, Paul would go to a town. A bunch of people would get saved in the synagogue, and they'd keep coming to the synagogue and having their meetings there.

But eventually, it just didn't work in the temple and it just didn't work in the synagogue, and so they began to pull out and establish their own Christian assemblies. And the natural place to go, first of all, was to homes. Right? So the Church began in homes. And they must have been some very substantial homes. Some very large homes, to accommodate the many Christians that existed in those early years.

By the - oh, I'd say between the middle and the end of the second century, they began to build their own buildings to accommodate all of the Christians. But here, they were still meeting in an upper room, in a home. And when Paul wrote Colossians 4:15, he referred to the Church in the home. When he wrote Romans 16:5 and 1 Corinthians 16:19, he referred to the Church in the home, Aquila and Priscilla and Philemon too, refers to the Church that met in the home. And so there was a very common occurrence in the Early Church, and that was to meet in homes. And then later on, buildings were built.

Just all of that to say this. It's important for the Church to come together someplace. We cannot exist in isolation, can we? We need the fellowship, the unity of the body. And so this little pattern here that we see gives us an example of how the Early Church met. On the first day of the week, verse 7, "When the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart the next day, and continued to speak until midnight, and there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together."

So they met in an upper chamber. They broke bread. Now what do you mean by that? Well, of course, that's the reference to the ancient Palestinian custom. The meal was officially begun when the host broke bread, literally. And the breaking of bread came to refer to the Christians coming

together, and they did two things. They had the love feast. Remember? And communion, or the Lord's Table.

This was a beautiful thing. You say, "What was the love feast?" Well, the love feast was like a potluck meal, and it was for the purpose of sharing. You had - one of the very basic things of the Christian Church is fellowship, isn't it? And love. And so the poor people would come, and they couldn't bring anything, and the people who could would bring enough for the poor people, and they would all share as an expression of love. It was a beautiful sharing. The common meal. And it was followed immediately by the breaking of bread and the celebration of the Lord's Day. This was the breaking of bread for the Early Church. The agape love feast and communion.

You know, it's a sad thing to think about, but the agape love feast kind of faded from the scene. You know why? Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Do you know what he said to them in chapter 11? He said, "You really messed up the love feast." 1 Corinthians 11. Let me just read you a couple of verses. And this is what happened to the love feast. It just deteriorated. He says in verse 20, 1 Corinthians 11, "When you come together therefore into one place, this is not the Lord's Supper which you eat." In other words, "You think you're coming together for the Lord's Supper, but you're not. You polluted it. It isn't His supper." "For in eating, everyone takes before the other his own supper."

Can you imagine going to a potluck and have everybody sit in their own corner and eat their own potluck? It's what was happening. And some of the hungry people who had nothing were coming, and they were going away hungry. And so he says, "One is hungry and another is drunk." In other words, the people who come and have nothing get nothing. The people who come and have a lot overindulge.

He says, and I think this is important. He says, "Don't you have houses to eat and drink in?" If that's all you're going to do, go home. "Or despise you the Church of God and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. You have literally despised the unity of the Church." And so that's what happened, and the whole beautiful commonness of the love feast just faded historically.

But you know, communion also got hit in history. The Catholic Church moved in, and when the Catholic Church dominated the world, before the Reformation, communion stopped being a natural, informal, warm sharing together in the memory of Christ, and it became a mystical priestly ceremony that's now continuing to go on, known as the mass. And somehow, Protestantism sprang out of that, and we got a little closer to the truth, but I'm not sure we're there yet. We still think of communion as something that's performed by a whole lot of ministers, and it has to be done with little silver trays and little - and walking up and down aisles, and organs playing. And I think that's wrong, too. I think that's one way to do it, but I think communion is something we all ought to do much more frequently than we do.

Often people will say, "You know, John, I'd like to participate in communion, but I can't come on Wednesday nights." That's no excuse. That's no excuse. You can have communion any time you want. The best place I think to teach your children communion is in your home. Teach them the meaning of breaking of bread. You know, some people just go crazy when you talk like this, because they say, "Only ordained ministers can do that." You can't find that in the Bible. You can share around the Lord's Table any time you want, and you should. Jesus said, "Do this until I come, and do it with you in the kingdom." It's your responsibility.

There are plenty of occasions. You know, can you imagine when you get together - have you ever gotten together with other Christians and gone home after evening and said, "What a wasted evening. We could have talked about the Lord, and all we did was fool around and talk about Aunt Mary and Mrs. So and So, and how we don't like this guy and this girl." Have you ever done that? Sure. And you had a whole \_\_\_\_\_ thing. How about if you came together three or four couples, and just started out by breaking bread. I think that might change the pattern of your evening. It might even change where you go after you got done, or what you talk about, for sure.

And so I think we need to remember that this is part of the Early Church. It was a common and easy and a natural and a flowing thing, right out of the life that they had and their love for the Lord Jesus Christ. It's just what they did when they came together. And that's the way it should be with us. But unfortunately, I think we've been victimized by those who have told us that all of these things are to be performed in some kind of a formal, ritualistic manner as well.

But the disciples came together to break bread, and here's the second thing that I want you to notice about the time they met together. Paul preached unto them. They came together for teaching. Whenever the Early Church came together, this was primarily the purpose. Sometimes it was to break bread, and there is no command here as to how frequently. It's just to be done often. And this time when they came together, they did that. But Paul preached unto them. This became the priority when they met, was preaching and teaching. And the word preaching here is not to preach the Gospel. You don't need to preach the Gospel at a service of breaking of bread, because everybody's already a Christian.

Paul taught them, and the word preaching here has to do with dialogue. He answered questions, and there was feedback, and he shared with them. Teaching. That was the priority. The Apostles had earlier said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word," Acts 6:4. And Acts 6:7 says, "And the Word multiplied and the Church multiplied." It says the same thing in Acts 12:24 and Acts 19:20. "The Word of God grew and prevailed." This is the priority.

Paul said to Timothy, "Until I get there, Timothy, you give yourself to reading the text, and you give yourself to teaching the text." That's why they came together. To teach. That's why you're here. You

don't come to church to relax. This isn't the time to come and turn your brain off, and say, "Oh, I'll just sit here. It's cool. And I'll listen to all that music and just kind of flake out, and my brain will take a vacation, see." When you come here, you ought to be ready to learn and absorb and to hear with obedient ears.

And you don't come to church to be entertained, either. You don't come together with the saints to be entertained. You come to be taught. I think sometimes that we fail to realize that.

Well, Paul did it. He preached, and he was ready to depart the next day. He knew that he was on his long journey. And I mean, those were long ones. This would take six weeks at least. Ready to depart on the next day. He continued to speak until midnight. That's availability, isn't it? Bless his heart. Here he is in town. He needs to rest so badly, but instead of resting, he speaks from whenever they start until midnight. He just keeps teaching. He's available. Even though he knew he had to take a terrible, long journey the next day, he's giving himself. Just totally giving himself. Available.

How available am I? How available are you to minister our gifts as we're needed? Sometimes, you know, somebody says, "John would you come over and do this, or teach this class?" And you just say to yourself, "Oh, I'm so tired." That's just such a terrible thing. That's a sin, to be unavailable.

And Paul, when he got there, didn't just say, well, a few nice little choice words. I've got to go. He continued his speech till midnight. Meetings weren't regulated by the clock, folks. They were regulated by the needs of the people, and their hunger for the Word. You see, in the early days, these people were hungry. They met for the Word. You know, 1 Peter 2:2 always hits me, and I get to thinking about this. It says, "As babies, desire the pure milk of the Word that you may grow thereby." I have never in my life seen a baby that didn't like milk. That baby not only likes it; that baby wants it. Babies want milk. You'd have a very abnormal, sick baby that didn't want milk, but I've sure seen a lot of Christians that didn't seem to want teaching.

You know, they think they've done a great thing when they've just, you know, drifted in and out of the Church on a periodic basis. If you don't have a hunger to know the Word of God, something has atrophied in your Christian life, or you're not a Christian.

The problem in the Early Church wasn't how do you get the people to come. It was how do you get them to go home? And let me tell you something, friends. This has been the characteristic of every period of reformation and revival in the history of the Church. You know that John Calvin preached every day for hours, day after day after day, year after year after year, and so did Martin Luther? And it was out of that the great days of the Reformation revival was spawned. That's been the history of the Church. Great men of God preach day after day after day after day in certain cities, and great revivals broke out. And people came, and they learned.

Well, they met together then, and Paul preached. Verse 8 says, "There were many lights in the upper chamber where they were gathered together." You say, "Why does it tell us there were lights there?" Well, I think there's two reasons. Number one, the pagans used to slander Christians and say that Christians were immoral and they met together for clandestine purposes, and they got in their little cubbyholes in the dark and committed all sorts of abominations. And so some commentators feel that the Spirit puts the little note, "there were many lights," in there, just to let us know that the Christians in Troas had lit the place up like a Christmas tree so nobody in town could criticize them for meeting in the dark.

But I think there's another reason, probably more accurate. And that is that it explains how this guy who fell asleep in the next verse fell asleep, because all the lights in there, and they have had them in there just for that purpose that I mentioned to you, but all those lights in there were oil-burning lamps, and they would have created a tremendous stuffy atmosphere. All the fumes and the little smoke that would come off of that oil, and the place was really filling up. And apparently, an upper chamber would maybe hold 30, 40 people in a good-sized home, and they'd be crammed in. And if there were 50 or 60 there, they would be just like sardines, and all that smoke coming off of there, and that may have created the problem. The burning oil, the stuffy atmosphere, and that part of the world at that time, perhaps that evening, deterioration of the atmosphere.

Verse 9. "And there sat in a window -" Fortunate young man that he could find air, and so he got by a window and sat on the windowsill. The windows of course were lattices or wooden windows that opened. They didn't have any glass. "And his name was Eutychus, and being fallen into a deep sleep," and the verb there in the Greek is a present participle, which means he was progressively falling asleep while he was trying to fight it. Just so - you know how it is. You've done it. Your head goes, and then \_\_\_\_\_ wonderful, wonderful point. Oh, it's terrific. You've got to write that note down. Yes. I see.

Well, that's Eutychus. He'd bob his head down, and he'd pull it up again and blink around. But he was fighting. And finally the \_\_\_\_\_ overcame him, "And he being fallen into a deep sleep, and as Paul was long preaching, he sank down with sleep." He was out. And then of course we know how serious it is to fall asleep during a sermon, because immediately the Lord dealt with him. He fell from the third loft and was taken up dead. So think about that, folks.

But he fell asleep and fell right out of the window, three stories down, and died. Now that's a fantastic thing. I always think of that little lady, you know, who had insomnia, and she kept going to the doctor, and they couldn't help her. And she just finally figured out the best thing to do would be to go to church each night, and she had no trouble sleeping there. So that's perhaps the experience of many. Some aren't always asleep with their eyes closed, either.

He fell down, and he was taken up dead. That's the quote of Luke, incidentally, who wrote the passage here, under the inspiration of the Spirit, but Luke's comment is that he was dead. Now I've heard all kinds of commentators and all kinds of people say he wasn't dead. He just appeared to be dead, and he just was taken up as if he were dead. It doesn't say that. It says he was taken up dead. He was dead. Three story fall.

Well, look what happens. That would kind of tend to break the meeting up, and it did. Verse 10, "And Paul went down and fell on him." And of course, the idea of fell there is to place himself on him. Not just to collapse on him, which wouldn't have helped him at all. Paul went down and just placed himself on him. And it says, "He embracing him," and the idea of that - it's a double compound Greek verb, and it means he just wrapped himself around him. You say, "Why did he do that?" Well, maybe he remembered Elijah and Elisha. 1 Kings 17, 2 Kings 4. Remember, both of them embraced and put themselves all the way around a man and raised him from the dead, which it was a child in that case.

And so he just places himself around Eutychus, who is a young man. Perhaps a teenager. And I love this. He says, "Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him." One liberal commentator said, when he put himself around him, he could hear his heart ticking, and he said, "Oh, he's all right," and got up. No. He was dead. What happened was a resurrection miracle.

You know, Paul had a great prayer that he prayed in Philippians 3:10. He said, "I pray that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection." And boy, he did know it, didn't he? He knew resurrection power. He wrapped himself around. In a minute, a miracle happened. All of the broken bones and all of the injuries of his body that had caused the death reversed themselves and he was alive.

And you can imagine, that really had an effect on the people in that little church. Right? Probably - you say, "Why does God do that?" Well, God always does miracles to increase faith. And it may have been that in that little meeting up there in that little upper room, some of those people were saying, "You know, this guy, I don't know. Who is this guy? We've heard about him." But he hadn't really been a big part of Troas life. He just passed by there once. So that wasn't - he wasn't any great person, like in Ephesus or Corinth, where he'd been frequently. And maybe some of them were saying, "Well, can we believe everything he's telling? I mean, he's been talking till midnight. I mean, is all this true? How do we know he's the real prophet of God or the real preacher of God? How can we believe him?" And what does God always use to confirm His teachers in the New Testament era? Miracles.

And you can believe they all stood down there and said, "Yes, we can believe him. He raised that young man from the dead." And verse 12 says, "They brought the young man alive and were not a little comforted." No. They were a lot comforted. Yes. It says, "Trouble not yourselves," verse 10. And that's \_\_\_\_\_, which is a Greek verb that is used to speak of wailing and lamenting. It's the one used

in Mark 5, when everyone was wailing and lamenting. This is the weeping and lamenting that goes on when somebody dies. So he says, "Stop weeping and lamenting. His life is in him. He's alive."

I'll tell you something, friends. I love to see resurrections in the Bible. I just love them. You know why? Because they just add another guarantee that my resurrection's going to come off.

Verse 11. "When he therefore was come up again -" They took care of Eutychus. Came back up. Got to have more meeting. You can believe by this time that they wanted some more teaching. Right? Because now everybody believed. You know, when you listen with believing ears and confident ears, you're tending to listen better. Right?

Well, anyway, they went back upstairs. And I like this. They broke bread. They had the Lord's Table. Had eaten. And they - and talked a long while, Paul did, "Even till break of day." Then he departed. You know, that's a long sermon, folks. He started till midnight. A guy fell out of the window. Raised him from the dead. Twelve fifteen, he picked it up and went till dawn.

But he's got a long journey to take, yes, but he's an available man. You see, he loves the Church. And the love of the Church dictates to him what he does with his time. It isn't selfish. It's selfless. So the Apostle Paul taught them all night long.

You know, I sometimes just have to look at my own life and say, "Boy, are you a million miles from the Apostle Paul. You think you've done your big thing when you preach a couple of sermons on Sunday." And you know, and some people think, "Well, I've taught my class. Oh, weary, weary." See? "I've been to a Bible study this week. Had my exposure."

Here was a man who knew no bounds. The ministry of his gift. I don't know what your gifts are. Some of you I know, but how available is your gift? How available are you? Paul was available. He loved the Church. And if they had a need, he was ready to meet it. It didn't matter what it cost him.

But if you think that kind of availability's amazing, look at verse 13. "And we went ahead to the ship," Luke says, "and sailed to Assos." The next day, of course, they had to get to the ship and get off on their journey. "There, intending to take Paul in, for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot." Now that is staggering. Everybody gets on the boat at Troas and they go 30 miles to Assos, except Paul. You know what he does? He walks. You say, "He walks? Why does he do that?" Simple reason. What did I tell you a couple of weeks ago was customary when a beloved friend left a certain people? It was customary for those people whom he was leaving to what? Accompany him on his journey. You know why Paul walked? Paul walked so he could have more time with them. Selfless man. He wasn't in a hurry, was he? He was available.



Oh, how he loved the Church. He walked between 20 and 30 miles, and probably the last five or ten miles, he walked alone. And I'm sure he needed that time to be alone with the Lord before he met his friends at the ship. Well, that's availability, people. That's availability. To give yourself all night. To walk whatever mile is needful to be walked to minister. I pray God will help us to be available as he was available.

I think, too, that lastly his love for the Church is visible in his concern. They met in Assos and got on the ship together, verse 14 says. And then it says, verse 15, "We sailed from there. Came the next day opposite Kios. The next day at Samos. \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. And the next day came to Miletus.

This is an interesting thing just to note. I'm not going to go into all the geography of those cities or any of that, but each one of those cities is about 30 miles past the next one, all down the little coast of Asia Minor. And the thing was that the winds only blew from early morning to late afternoon, so they would just travel from early morning to late afternoon. Thirty miles, stay overnight. Thirty miles, stay overnight. Thirty miles, stay overnight. Thirty miles, stay overnight. That's how they journeyed. And so that's why it tells us about all those little stops.

And it says they came to Miletus. Now Miletus was a town, the ancient capital of Ionia. It was not too far from Ephesus. It was originally supposed to have a colony of Cretans. It became extremely powerful and built one of the world's great magnificent temples, dedicated to the god Apollo, so it was somewhat famous. But they came to Miletus, not too far from Ephesus. Verse 16 tells us then, "For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus because he wouldn't spend the time in Asia." Apparently, the ship going to Ephesus, or the one that would have stopped there, was going to stay too long, and he was in a hurry. So because he didn't want to spend time in Asia, he didn't take the ship to Ephesus, but the one that stopped at Miletus. Apparently, he had a choice from Troas. "And he hastened so that it might be possible for him to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost." The Miletus ship was going to get there sooner than the one that stopped at Ephesus.

But notice verse 17. "When he stopped at Miletus, he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the Church." You say, "What's so important about that?" Just this. Here he is in the middle of this journey, and he stops in Miletus, and he's got a few days before the boat takes off. And what does he do in those few days? Rest? No. He calls for the elders of Ephesus to come over that he might teach them some more. Instruct them some more. Exhort them some more. The man is unbelievable in his commitment to the love of the Church.

You know what happened? One of the most beautiful scenes, as I said, ever in the life of Paul happened. Because when those elders got there, they gave him back all the love he'd given them. They just poured it all over him. But that's for next time.

You say, "John, what's all this saying to me?" Well, I know what it said to me. What's it saying to you? Listen to this. Paul said this. "Brethren," Philippians 3:17. "Brethren, be followers together of me." What does that mean? That means that Paul loved the Church. What should we do? Love the church.

To the Philippians he said again, in 4:9, "The things which you have both learned and heard and seen in me, do." To the Corinthians he said, "Be followers of me as I am of Christ." So if we look at Paul and we see his love for the Church, then we ought to know that Paul is the pattern for every Christian. Isn't he? I ought to love the Church like that. Yes, I should. All of the features of Paul's love should be features of my life.

Paul wrote a chapter and laid it out. This isn't just the example of Paul's life, but he pinpointed every one of these things. Romans 12, and I'm going to close it by showing a few things here. In Romans 12, Paul gives the basic principles of the Christian life. Now listen. And every one of the features of Paul's love are included in this section.

You're a Christian. Are you to love the Church? Yes. Look at verse 9. "Let love be without hypocrisy." That means you're to love the Church truly. Right? And he's talking about the body of Christ, because he's talked about all the spiritual gifts before, in the passage right before. We're to love the Church.

Now how is that love to be demonstrated? How are we to love the Church sincerely? How are we to demonstrate it? Well, how did Paul? Number one, by affection. Didn't we say that? Look at 12:10. "Be kindly," what? "Affectionate, one to another, with brotherly love."

Secondly, we said Paul loved the Church as illustrated in his giving. In his giving. Look at verse 13. "Distributing to the," what? "Necessity of the saints." That's giving.

And we said Paul loved the Church in terms of his teaching, didn't he? What does he say in verses 6-8? "If you prophesy, if you have the gift of prophecy, do it. Ministry, do it. If you teach, teach. If you have the gift of exhortation, exhort. If you have the gift of ruling, do it with diligence. If you have the gift of showing mercy, do it with cheerfulness." What's he saying? He's saying, do it, whatever your gift is.

Paul showed his love by using his gift, the gift of teaching. You, by whatever gift you have.

Then we said Paul showed his love by persistence, didn't we? Look at Romans 12:11. "Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope. Patient in tribulation. Continuing diligently in prayer." Verse 14, "Bless them who persecute you. Bless and curse not." In other words, against all things, pursue the love of the Church, the love of the saints.

We said also that Paul's love was seen in his availability. Look at the end of verse 13. "Given to hospitality." that's availability. The love of strangers. The willingness to give yourself to the needs of others.

And lastly, Paul's love was seen in his concern. Verse 15. Here's concern. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." Beloved, we're called on to do the same thing Paul did. Love the Church as he loved the Church, demonstrating it in the same ways. May it be so. And pray that the Lord would somehow take that which is the pattern of one man's life and make it the pattern of the lives of all men.

Let's pray. Father, we do pray to that end, that all who are in the hearing of this Thy Word to us, would somehow be able to take the pattern of the life of this man and make it the pattern of their own life. God, give us a love for the Church, and we know that it comes only when we love the Lord Jesus Christ with all our hearts, soul, mind, and strength. We pray that we would so love the Church, evidenced in our affection, our giving, our ministry of whatever gifts we have, and persistence and availability and concern, and Father, that in loving the Church as we should love the Church, we would see the gifts and ministries carried on, that the Church might be built up to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray in His name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).