

“YOU WILL KNOW THEY ARE CHRISTIANS BY THEIR LOVE”

Acts 20:36-21:6

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INTRODUCTION

The apostle John makes clear that the essence of Christianity and Christian relations is Love: I John 4:7-8, 11-12, 19-21.

In today's passage the Holy Spirit, who inspires all Scripture and puts there everything we need for life and service (II Tim. 3:16-17) gives us some very practical evidence of this **deep love** that believers in the early church had for one another and for their spiritual leaders. This passage is about a great deal more than sailing on a ship and traveling across the Mediterranean Sea! It is much more than following Paul on the conclusion of his third missionary journey. It is an **illustration of the great love of God's servant for God and for doing God's will, and of the great love of God's people for God's Word and for God's servant.**

YOU CANNOT LOVE GOD IF YOU DO NOT LOVE GOD'S PEOPLE AND GOD'S PREACHERS.

We are far too selfish and self-focused in our culture today. People are all around us and yet we insulate and isolate ourselves in our own little world. **There were no “lone rangers”** in the early church. God's people loved to be together, worship together, pray together, serve together—so must we!

Before we view the passage before us in detail, let us review some of the key lessons we have learned from Acts chapter 20 and Paul's message to the Ephesian elders/pastors:

- 1) The central place of preaching (20:7, 28)
- 2) Zeal to reach the multitudes (20:16, 26)
- 3) The need for Humility (20:19)
- 4) The danger of withholding truth (20:20-27)
- 5) The need for earnest testimony for Christ (20:21)
- 6) The need for a single-minded purpose in serving Christ (20:24)
- 7) The need for a personal walk with God (20:28—take heed to **yourself**)
- 8) The Power of the Word of God (20:32)
- 9) The need for a generous spirit (20:35)

Oh, that we would learn these lessons and practice them!

Now we learn a tenth lesson:

- 10) The importance of love for fellow Christians.
 - I. LOVING DEPARTURE FROM THE ELDERS OF EPHESUS (20:36-38)
 - A. The Importance of Group Prayer (36)
 - B. The importance of Open Expressions of Love (37)
 - C. The importance of the desire to be together with our brothers and sisters (38)
 - D. The importance of helping one another with our needs and duties (38b)

- E. The difficulty of separation from our brethren—21:1—Paul had been “torn apart” from them!
- II. LOVING VISIT WITH THE BELIEVERS IN TYRE (21:1-6)
- The route traveled: Cos, Rhodes, Patara (1)
 - Obtaining a large merchant vessel that could safely and swiftly travel the open sea (2)
 - Speed and urgency of the trip—reach the destination (Jerusalem) in time to worship the feast, and give the offering to the poor saints.
- A. Putting forth the effort to find and fellowship with believers (4)
- B. Taking Time to minister to and encourage and worship with believers—“seven days” (4)
- C. Loving concern of believers for Paul’s safety and well being (4)
- D. Intimate fellowship of all the believers at the time of Paul’s departure (5)
1. A church “escort”—like a “hospitality committee”!
 2. Whole families involved—even children (only mention of children in Acts!) **How we need to expose our children to God’s men who preach the Word and serve the Lord!**
- E. Kneeling and praying together again (5)
- F. The apostle goes on his way to do his ministry; the **church goes back to its work of winning the lost and training disciples** (6).

CONCLUSION

I love the brief passage of Scripture and rejoice in what it shows us as a church.

WE MUST LOVE ONE ANOTHER, PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER, SPEND TIME WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND HELP ONE ANOTHER.

YOU CANNOT LOVE GOD IF YOU DO NOT LOVE GOD’S PEOPLE AND GOD’S PREACHERS.