

HE CHALLENGES THEM TO LIFE OF SACRIFICE (vv. 33-35)

³³ I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

1. What happens when our desire for wealth and status becomes greater than our desire for God?
2. What was Paul's strategy for keeping the desire for wealth and status in check?
3. What are some things we can do to keep the desire for wealth and status in check?
4. Why is it "more blessed to give than receive?"

A TEARFUL GOODBYE (vv. 36-38)

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. ³⁷ They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. ³⁸ What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

1. What is most moving about this final scene?
2. What are some ways this study challenges you to cultivate both courage and compassion as you lean into the year to come?



THE STORY CONTINUES

TOUGH AND TENDER | ACTS 20:13-38

One of the most moving memoirs of the Vietnam war is Hal Moore's, "We Were Soldiers, Once and Young." Moore commanded the 1st Battalion of the the 7th Calvary in the first official armed incursion of the war. Moore and his men were dropped behind enemy lines in the la Drang Valley where they were severely outnumbered and took heavy casualties.

Moore is an exceptional leader. In the movie, his character is set in sharp relief to the character played by Sam Elliot—Sergeant Major Basil Plumey. Plumey is as tough as nails and shows little to no emotion until the end of the movie. In opening scenes, one of the men greets Plumey with a cheery "Good morning, sir," Plumey responds, "How do you know what kind of [blinking blank] morning it's going to be."

Moore is every bit as tough as Plumey, but he has an uncommon touch, both with his men in the field and his wife and children at home.

In one of the the more touching scenes , Moore comes home at the end of a long day to find his kids rough housing on the bed when they should be tucked beneath the covers and sound asleep. He grins and asks, "Have you kids said your prayers yet." One by one they respond, "No." " Well, let's hit a knee then." Moore, a devout catholic leads them in a rote prayer, "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee..." He pauses when he realizes his youngest daughter is not praying, "Cecile, honey, why aren't you praying?" She responds, "I don't want to be a Catholic anymore, I want to be a Methodist like mommy," "Why, honey?" "Because when you are a Methodist you can pray what you want to."

One of the more inspiring scenes comes in a speech Moore delivers to his men before they ship out. He promises,

We are goin' into battle against a tough and determined enemy. I can't promise you that I will bring you all home alive. But this I swear before you and before Almighty God: That when we go into battle, I will be the first to set foot on the field, and I will be the last to step off. And I will leave no one behind. Dead or alive, we will all come home together.

You find the same combination of tough and tender in the Apostle Paul. He can describe himself as “a soldier who suffers hardship for the sake of Christ,” and in the next breath, he compares himself to “a nursing mother caring for her children.” Paul expresses a wonderful combination of courage and compassion in his final moments with the Ephesian elders.

PAUL GATHERS THE EPHESIAN ELDERS (vv. 13-17)

¹³ We went on ahead to the ship and sailed for Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had made this arrangement because he was going there on foot. ¹⁴ When he met us at Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵ The next day we set sail from there and arrived off Chios. The day after that we crossed over to Samos, and on the following day arrived at Miletus. ¹⁶ Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.

1. Why do you think Paul was in a hurry to make it to Jerusalem before Pentecost?
2. Why do you think Paul chose to make his way to Assos on foot, while his companions made the journey by ship?

HE REFLECTS ON THEIR TIME TOGETHER (vv. 18-21)

¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them: “You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. ¹⁹ I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing by the plots of my Jewish opponents. ²⁰ You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. ²¹ I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

1. How does Paul describe his own leadership style?
2. Which of these qualities is most meaningful to you? Why?
3. How does Paul describe the heart of his message?
4. How do repentance and faith capture the spirit of how we should respond to the message of Christ?

HE REFLECTS ON WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR HIM (vv. 22-27)

²² “And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit

warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. ²⁴ However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

²⁵ “Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

1. How do most of us respond to the prospect of difficulty and hardship?
2. How does Paul respond to the hardship that awaits him in Jerusalem?
3. What is the biblical view of hardship and suffering?
4. How can we, along with Paul, declare we are “innocent of the blood of anyone?”

HE REFLECTS ON WHAT LIES AHEAD FOR THEM (vv. 28-32)

²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, ^v which he bought with his own blood. ^a ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

³² “Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

1. Why is it important to keep a watch over ourselves before we take on a leadership role at home, in the marketplace or the church?
2. What does keeping watch over ourselves involve?
3. How does Paul describe the church?
4. How is the church to be led?
5. What are some challenges the church faces from without?
6. What are some challenges the church faces from within?
7. How can we best prepare ourselves for these challenges?
8. What does Paul tell us that the word of God’s grace can do for us?
9. How do we commit ourselves to God and the word of his grace?