

Good Shepherd Sunday
May 12th, 2019
Pastor Matthew Ude

Acts 20:17-35 ¹⁷ From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹ "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰ "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³ "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴ "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶ "Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹ "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ³² "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵ "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Paul Teaches Us To Live The 23 Psalm

"With All Humility," Paul's words here don't really sound all that humble. Instead they might sound like a list of all the great things he has done. That is until we look at verse 32. Verse 32 shows us what is really in Paul's heart. In this verse Paul confesses that all he has done is not his work but the work of God through Him. He says, "I commend," that is, "I hand you over." And also in verse 28, "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

With these words Paul confess that the Church is not His, that it belongs to Christ. He also confesses that it is not his hard work that built up and kept the church safe, but instead it is only God and His word of grace which is able to build and keep them and you in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In other words Paul confess that Christ is and has always been the true Shepherd. Christ bought the church with His own blood and elected all these people. Christ made them His little lambs and sheltered and took care of them. He, Paul, was simply an under shepherd for a short time. For a little while Christ

worked through Paul, and now having given Paul a new task, Paul hands them back to the one who was watching over them the whole time.

When we understand this we can see that this whole section of scripture is not a list of all the great things Paul has done but instead a list of all the great things Christ has done through him.

Paul's words here show us one who lived under the protection of His Good Shepherd. Day after day, in every situation, whether full or hungry, in prison or free, beaten with stones or left for dead in the road, Paul rejoiced in knowledge of Christ as his Good Shepherd.

He lived Psalm 23. He lived it every day. He held it in his heart and rejoiced in it every day of his life. And this is what we learn today. We learn with Paul how to live Psalm 23.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want -

Here is one place where the NIV translation is actually much better than the NKJ. The NIV here has "I lack nothing." This is much closer to the original Hebrew. When Christ is our shepherd there is nothing missing from our lives.

And notice how Paul confess this not only in our text but in many of His letters

Ephesians 1:3 NKJ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

Now you might say how can Paul say, "there is nothing missing, nothing lacking in my life." He didn't have very much money. He didn't have a house. He didn't have a wife or a family. He didn't have a fishing boat. He didn't have video games or a TV, or whatever you kids put on your list to Santa last year.

In verse 24 Paul tells us he doesn't care about any of these things.

"none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy"

Paul lacked nothing, not because he had all the riches of this world, but because Christ his good Shepherd had lead him to understand that none of the things of this world are of any value or important in any way. Even my life Paul says I count as nothing. But only the joy of finishing the race and receiving the inheritance. He lacked nothing because he had Christ and that is all he wanted or needed.

Now Christ our Good Shepherd has also promised to take care of our bodily needs. And this also Paul says he never lacked from His Good Shepherd. Who always provided for him. But this isn't what filled him. Paul was full because he heart was set on the things above.

Psalms 23:2 NKJ ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

Verse two paints this picture of Christ leading us to this peaceful pleasant meadow, where there is nothing bad and we can relax and just lay in the sun or the shade whichever you prefer.

How can we say this about Paul's life? He was pursued from city to city. The Jews were always plotting against him. He was stoned and imprisoned. Indeed he confesses how the Spirit made it clear that he went up to Jerusalem to be imprisoned and in chains. And what was to happen to him after that? He doesn't know. What was peaceful or pleasant about His life?

But Paul life was one of peace. It was one of sitting by the still waters. It was not the peace of this earth. It was the peace the Angels sang about Christmas morning. How many times does he repeat, "repentance and faith in Christ Jesus . . . the gospel of the grace of God . . . the church which He bought with his own blood."

Paul had peace because He knew that He was Jesus little lamb. He was like one who sits in a house when outside it is storming. He had forgiveness through Jesus' blood. he was safe and at peace with His God no matter what troubles or storms brewed around him.

Very often the worst problems we have in life our problems of our own making. The sins we have done. Yet when we turn to Jesus we receive forgiveness and we can have peace. And Jesus promises to heal and fix what was wrong.

Psalm 23:4 NKJ ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You *are* with me;

Were there enemies? Were there dangers? Of course there were. Did Paul walk through the valley of the shadow of death? Yes.

I have told you and could tell you many more stories about these same dangers today. In many places in the world persecution of Christians is very real. There are many American missionaries for example in India that have been killed in the last 20 years. There was one missionary to India at the time when I was there, who slept in his car, and the Hindus surrounded him at night and burnt him alive with his son in the car.

Paul faced many similar persecutions in His day. Yet he dismisses these enemies as not worth his time to worry about. The enemies that he warns to watch out for, that he says we should worry about are in verses 29 and 30:

²⁹ "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰ "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Torture, imprisonment, being killed, these things are nothing to Paul.

Philippians 1:21 NKJ For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

But false teachers, those who twist and pervert the gospel of Christ. Those who use God's word to gather large followings not to teach them about Christ and the forgiveness of sins but to line their own pockets. These people seek to lead us away from our Good shepherd. These are the enemies Paul warns about. They don't just kill the body but seek to lead us away from the Good Shepherd and the still waters.

Many of them use the same lie that Satan use to eve. This will make you happy. This is what you deserve. They lead us to think the grass is greener in another pasture other than that of our Good Shepherd.

On the one hand Paul entreats us with tears to stay on alert against such false teachers, yet on the other hand it is the Good Shepherd alone who can keep us safe, therefore he says, " I commend you to God and the Word of His grace."

And having handed them over to the Good Shepherd. Placing himself in the hands of the Good Shepherd, Paul confesses with David:

Psalm 23:6 NKJ ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

Amen.