

# Further up, Further in

## Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT  
MOUNTAIN  
PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH

DATE: October 18, 2020

SPEAKER: Chad, Brian

SERIES: Acts

PASSAGE: Acts 20:22-38

### Family Dinner Table

Paul ended his parting words to the leaders of the Ephesian church with this saying: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35) Maybe you've heard those words before. Maybe your mom said them to you when you didn't feel like giving anything that belonged to you to someone else—your sister, your friend, a neighbor down the street. Because Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit and because he spent a lot of time with people who had actually walked and talked with Jesus when he was here on earth, he could say with confidence that these were words that Jesus himself had said. This was something important that our Lord and Savior wanted his people to know.

What exactly does it mean, though? And when we know this saying to be true and understand what it means, how should we then spend our time and our money? As you think about this, it might help to understand that when the Bible talks about "blessing," it means more than just happiness and way more than "#blessed" (being blessed by God does not mean that everything will always go our way). A blessed person is a becoming-more-like-Jesus person.

#### PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

The Chalmers Center: Faith & Finance

#### PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Bruce and Barbara Wannemacher serving with MTW in South Africa

### "PARTING WORDS TO LEAD AND LIVE BY"

#### For individual study or discussion

When we have only a little of something left, we are far more careful with how we use it. We tend to be wasteful with whatever we have much of, only to realize later how precious the thing is when it's running out or about to disappear. This is especially true of time. We can so easily feel that we have all the time in the world to say something or do something, until we reach the moment when there's no time left. Last farewells are often accompanied by thoughts of should-have-said's and wished-I-had-done's.

Probably none of us can completely avoid these kinds of regrets, but Paul had perhaps fewer than most when he met with the Ephesian elders for a final time. As we discovered in our study of the first section of his farewell address last week, he had used his time well in the three years he spent in Ephesus, preaching to Jews and Gentiles alike whatever was helpful, serving the Lord with great humility and with tears. (Acts 20:19-20) And then, before boarding the ship, he took the last moments he had with these dearly beloved brothers to share with urgency and wisdom the right way to lead and to live.

- 1) Paul's chief concern was not for his reputation or livelihood, but for the church. Bought by God's own blood (v. 28), the flock was to be tended carefully and tirelessly. Much of the instructions given about taking care of the flock are directed specifically to the "overseers," but there is much here for everyone in the church, whether a leader or not, to benefit from.
  - What do we learn about the value and importance of the church in this passage?
  - How should leaders "keep watch over" themselves (see v. 28)?
  - What responsibilities do church members have to ensure that leaders are, in fact, doing this, or are able to do this? (See Mark 1:35, 1 Thess. 5:12-13, and 1 Cor. 9:7-12))
- 2) Paul declared to the Ephesian elders that he was "innocent of the blood of all men" because he had not hesitated to "proclaim to you the whole will of God." (vv. 26-27) These sobering words echo the instructions given to Ezekiel when he was told to warn Israel (see Ezekiel 3:16-21).
  - How does this apply to leaders, teachers, and preachers today?
- 2) If you've read through Paul's letters, you know about some of the "wolves" that threatened the flock in the first century. (See, for example, the book of Galatians, especially chapter 3.)
  - What wolves threaten the church today? What do we especially need to be on guard against?
  - What role does generosity play in enabling the protection of the weak? (See v. 35)