

# GUARDIANS OF THE GOSPEL

ACTS 20:16-37

After our spiritual mentors have passed, who will grab the baton to continue the race as GUARDIANS of the true Gospel of Jesus? Today we are challenged to take on that task.

**Acts 20:16-17** (NET) <sup>16</sup> For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so as not to spend time in the province of Asia, for he was hurrying to arrive in Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost. <sup>17</sup> From Miletus he sent a message to Ephesus, telling the **elders** of the church to come to him.

**Pentecost** in Acts 2 is likely about 20 before and now Paul is now **hurrying to arrive in Jerusalem** for the Pentecost celebration.

Paul knew that stopping in Ephesus would delay him getting to Jerusalem, so Paul bypasses Ephesus but sends a messenger on the 45 mi trek to **Ephesus**,<sup>1</sup> to bring **elders** of the Ephesian church back for a short visit.

These **elders** are spiritually mature men also called **overseers** or guardians in verse 28. Paul gives the qualifications for elders in 1 Tim. 3:1-7. These men are also referred to as those who **shepherd/pastor** (v. 28) as they teach, direct, & protect the church in Ephesus.

**Acts 20:18-19** (NET)<sup>18</sup> When they arrived, he said to them, "You yourselves know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I set foot in the province of Asia,<sup>19</sup> **serving the Lord with all humility and with tears**, and with the trials that happened to me because of the plots of the Jews.

Paul invested 3 years of his life with the people of Ephesus. It was to these men that Paul had modeled what it meant to be a follower of Jesus and a **Guardian of the Gospel**.

Paul had shown these men that...

**Guardians of the Gospel serve daily, suffer momentarily, & share consistently.**

Paul faced threats, beatings, & even death yet he obviously thought **serving the Lord with all humility and tears** was worth it.

1) **Guardians of the Gospel SERVE daily.** *Serving is so much more than an event, serving Jesus is a LIFE-STYLE...in everything we do.*

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**Colossians 3:23-24** (NET) <sup>23</sup> Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people,<sup>24</sup> because you know that you will receive your inheritance from the Lord as the reward. **Serve the Lord Christ.**

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*Do you wake up with that attitude?*

2) **Guardians of the Gospel SUFFER momentarily.** *No one signs up for the suffering, but it comes with the territory. Momentary suffering causes us to REALLY count the cost. Is following Jesus REALLY worth it? Have you answered that question?!?*

In a powerful passage Paul shares why anyone would be willing to suffer for Jesus.

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**2 Corinthians 4:17-18** (NET) <sup>17</sup> For our **momentary, light suffering** is producing for us an **eternal weight of glory** far beyond all comparison <sup>18</sup> because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

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### 3) **Guardians of the Gospel SHARE consistently.**

**Acts 20:20-21** (NET) <sup>20</sup> You know that I did not hold back from proclaiming to you anything that would be helpful, and from teaching you publicly and from house to house, <sup>21</sup> testifying to both Jews and Greeks about **repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.**

Paul had not only taught publicly in places like the synagogue & Hall of Tyrannus, but going TO THEM to **from house to house**, teaching the essence of the Gospel - **repentance & faith: Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.**

Are YOU wondering what God wants from your life? Here it is: **Repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus.** We TURN FROM our sin and TURN TO a lifestyle of trusting Jesus.

**Acts 20:22-25** (NET) <sup>22</sup> And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem without knowing what will happen to me there,<sup>23</sup> except that the Holy Spirit warns me in town after town that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. <sup>24</sup> But I do not consider my life worth anything to myself, so that I may **finish my task and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus**, to testify to the good news of God's grace. <sup>25</sup> "And now I know that none of you among whom I went around proclaiming the kingdom will see me again.

That's commitment! Paul had died to his own desires a long time ago. And now, rather to stay with these friends, Paul said the words that must have cut these men to the heart. WHAT??? Paul is leaving...and never coming back!???

**Acts 20:26** (NET) <sup>26</sup> Therefore I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of you all.<sup>27</sup> For I did not hold back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God.

Paul had been a good watchman, like Ezekiel (see of Ezek 33:1-6), blowing the trumpet to warn his people of the danger approaching. **Paul was reminding people of the great price Jesus paid AND the great judgment that was coming.** Paul had not been guilty of being silent...HAVE YOU???? Who is it that you KNOW you should have shared with...but simply haven't?

**What if you could start over** and from THIS POINT ON, never be guilty of being silent and tell others what would you do different? Why not start today?

### **Warning of False Teachers**

**Acts 20:28-31** (NET) <sup>28</sup> Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son.<sup>29</sup> I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. <sup>30</sup> Even from among your own group men will arise, **teaching perversions of the truth** to draw the disciples away after them. <sup>31</sup> Therefore **be alert**, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears.

🌿 Here's a teaching perverting the truth that has permeated our culture...from Oprah to most of the Word-Faith teachers today:

**"Proverbs 18:21** says: *Death and life are in the power fo the tongue.*" (ESV) You can SPEAK life into existence - that is - that you supposedly can speak in faith like God does - and what you say will be done 'name it, claim it'.

One prominent guy who teaches this is **Joel Osteen**.

*"That's what it says in Romans 4:17. 'We have to call the things that are not as if they already are.' "*<sup>2</sup>

Is that what the Scripture SAYS and MEANS? Here it is in context:

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**Romans 4:17** (NIV) As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.

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Does that passage say, 'We have to call the things that are not as if they already are' as Osteen states? No. It is speaking about "God who...calls into being things that were not" - specifically, the miraculous pregnancy of Isaac to Sarah. Abraham believed God at His promise, yet reading the rest of the passage says NOTHING about Abraham speaking faith-filled words. Evidently, Abraham's thoughts, not his words, were recognized by God.

**OSTEEN @ 6:33** *I don't know about you, but I'm not gonna speak defeat over my life. My declaration is "I'm getting younger. God is renewing my youth like the eagle. I am getting stronger. Health and healing is flowing through me. I'm getting better-looking; I'll gonna keep my hair.*

*@ 7:09 They have said it so much, it's become a reality. The more we talk about it, the more we're gonna call it in.*

 **Jesus Calling** by Sarah Young

*"This devotional shares the words Jesus laid on Sarah's heart. They are words of reassurance, comfort, and hope. The Jesus Calling app gives you access to uniquely inspired treasures from heaven for every day of the year!"*

\* If you refuse to receive warning about these personalities/resources, please read/listen to with a sensitive ear and reading Scriptures in context (many verses before/behind quoted passage).

May WE be able to echo the rest of Paul's words to those who come after us...our children & those younger in the faith.

**Acts 20:32-35** (NET) <sup>32</sup> And now I entrust you to God and to the message of his grace. This message is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. <sup>33</sup> I have desired no one's silver or gold or clothing. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands of mine provided for my needs and the needs of those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> By all these things, I have shown you that by working in this way we must help the weak, and remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

Paul had handed the baton off to these elders, calling them to be...

***Guardians of the Gospel serve daily, suffer momentarily, & share consistently.***

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48SabOT6P2A>

**Acts 20:36-37** (NET) <sup>36</sup> When he had said these things, he knelt down with them all and prayed. <sup>37</sup> They all began to weep loudly, and hugged Paul and kissed him,<sup>38</sup> especially saddened by what he had said, that they were not going to see him again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

***Guardians of the Gospel serve daily, suffer momentarily, & share consistently.***

1. **How are you SERVING Jesus in your daily tasks....**or do you even think about that? How can you SERVE SOMEONE in His name?
2. **When is the last time you SUFFERED for the Gospel of Jesus?** Does that concern you?
3. **When is the last time you SHARED Jesus with another person?** - believer or unbeliever?
4. **If every Christian follows YOUR example, will the Gospel continue past your generation?**