

king's chapel

Community Group Discussion Guide

Week of October 5, 2014

This Week's Focus: Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian Elders.

This Week's Text: Acts 20

*Take heed to yourselves, lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling blocks before the blind as may be the occasion of their ruin, lest you un-say with your lives what you say with your tongues, and be the greatest hinderers of the success of your own labors. One proud, surly, lordly word, one needless contention, one covetous action may cut the throat of many a word, and blast the fruit of all that you have been doing. Tell me, brothers, in the fear of God, do you regard the success of your labors, or do you not? Take heed to yourselves. **Richard Baxter***

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. **1 Peter 5:1-4***

Related Texts: 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; John 10:1-18

Observations and Questions for Discussion:

- What in the text was most illuminating or helpful? Why?
- Where was Paul heading when he set out from Ephesus?
 - Why did he take such a roundabout route?
 - How were these difficulties actually an advantage for Paul and the church?
 - What do you learn from this for yourself? Reference Genesis 50:20.
- Discuss the characteristics of Paul. Why do you think he had to review his past? How important is a good reputation, particularly while living on mission?
- What is a good definition for humility? How does one continue living a life of humility?

- Discuss the balance between truth and tears.
- What does the text tell us about the role of Elders? How does that change the way you see them?
- Paul says that he never hesitated to preach anything that would have been helpful to the church.
 - What do you think that involved? Do you have people in your life that you allow to “speak truth in love”?
- What is true repentance and what does it require? Reference 2 Corinthians 7:10-11 and 1 Thessalonians 1:9.
- How often does Paul mention the importance of knowing, studying, and declaring the gospel (word of God/grace)? Why?
- What does Paul mean that he is innocent of the blood of all men? Reference Ezekiel 33:1-9.
- Paul was ready to surrender his life for the gospel not “accounting” his life as precious in itself. Why? What does that look like for you?
- Paul admonishes the Ephesian leaders to beware of three things. What are they, where will they come, and how does each one of them apply to you and to our community? How can we protect the church from them? Reference verses 31-32.
- Paul had argued that those who labor in the gospel are worthy of being supported by the gospel. Reference 1 Corinthians 9:1-18 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18. Why do you think it was important for Paul to remind them that he worked with his own hands? Reference verses 33-34.
 - Discuss Paul's reason for working hard. Does that change the way you view work?
- In verses 36-38 it is obvious that Paul had developed deep friendships. How important is it to have close friends?
- Discuss the similarities between Paul's ministry and admonitions to those of Jesus?
- Discuss the differences between Paul having friends as he approached Jerusalem and Jesus' loneliness during his last days before his crucifixion. Reference *Disciples and the Father*.

Gospel Celebration:

- Jesus is the “good shepherd” who lays down his life for the sheep!
- On the cross Jesus is abandoned so that we can be brought in!
- Jesus experiences cosmic loneliness so that we can be a friend of God!

Next Week's Text: Acts 21