Acts Chapter 20 Verse 13

* It’s been calculated that over the course of Paul’s three missionary journeys, ***he walked approximately 10,000 miles!*** (That’s WAY more than The Proclaimers) If he had a Fitbit, that’s 53M steps! You might not be impressed – you who *battle* on Fitbit! But you clock 10,000 steps a day and still look for the best parking spot at the Walmart! ***HA!***
* Each a step of Paul…***a step of faith.*** I so admire him! A step of faith is difficult. Why? Because Hebrews 11:1 says that *faith is the substance of things hoped for*…you have to put yourself out there…place your hope in the Lord and trust that He will be there and with you (just like He said He would be)…but there is a ***ginormous reward*** and ***payoff*** to placing your faith in Jesus…**you find Him faithful**…and that ***bolsters, comforts, encourages, inspires, relieves your heart…it strengthens your faith!*** So, every step of faith towards the Lord…leads to stronger faith tomorrow…what a reward!
* And so Paul sends his entourage ahead of him to sail to Assos while he walks the 30 miles from Troas to Assos, why? ***He needed to be alone with the Lord.*** Here is an **echo** back to the dawn of creation…when we were young on this earth and things weren’t yet a mess…just being with the Lord…and listen…know this – sin is dealt with! **That problem is fixed**…Jesus paid it all and because of that, *sinful, fearful, weary, anxious, sad, hurting, needful* men and women can once again simply just be near to our Father in Heaven…and so Paul just wanted to walk a bit with the Lord….
* Ever feel ***without form and void***…let the Spirit of God move on you…, His words will be the same as they were then, simply by His Word falling on your heart, *“Let there be light…and there was light.”*

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 14 – 16

* He wasn’t trying to *slight* the church in Ephesus, he was trying to make the Feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem. He had a schedule to keep. He had already missed Passover and so he was hurrying…if he had stopped in Ephesus, ***no way to move on without truly slighting someone.*** You know Christians! You know how we talk and visit and can eat! ***Calorie Chapel baby, we love to hang!*** So many people there that he loved and would visit with and so he just skips it all together.

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 17 – 18

* There was a ***trustworthiness*** to Paul. A **consistency** to him…that from the first day that he came to them, the manner that he lived was consistent. What you saw is what you got…always. There was no ***church Paul*** and ***tent Paul***, ***there was just Paul***…consistency of character is important. Here’s a few quick reasons. It allows for **measurement.** Not just by others but by yourself. Areas that should and can be addressed, transformed into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word of God and received in faith by you and me.
* Consistency creates **accountability**…and really, ***invites correction.*** Consistency allows for a message to be maintained and even built day after day, year after year. It builds momentum and leads to success. ***Paul put on no face, he played no part, he was simply Paul***…the little one…saved by grace and full of faith in Jesus…and with that settled, he was free to simply share the love of Christ…he spent no time maintaining a false image and check this out…

Acts Chapter 20 Verse 19

* Not serving people, not building churches, not counting converts…which really ALL of those things are **good**…but notice his work…***serving the Lord*** with all humility! Through tears, through trials…man if he had of been serving people **he would have quit**…tears and trials aren’t worth people that reject you! But because he was serving the Lord *quit* was the last thing he wanted to do! Discouragement would come and in some odd supernatural way, he would find ***solace*** there…because he would re-center on the mission and the Lord Himself! His own people plotted against him and all it made him was stronger! How? ***He was serving the Lord before anything else!***
* You ever feel like the whole world is against you? It might be…but consider, ***the whole heaven is not.*** Jesus said in Matthew 12:30, *“He who is not with Me is against Me,”* but He ***never*** said He is against them…**He died for them**…you can’t be more for someone than to give your life for them…even when we mess up…***God is forever for you***…this is how, this is why you find strength as you walk with Him!

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 20 - 2

* This is really a rare break from *Paul the evangelist, Paul the missionary* and we are seeing **Paul the pastor**…Paul the teacher…and much of what he says in this encounter aligns succinctly with the letters he wrote to the churches. He says, *“I kept back nothing helpful!*” How that sentence haunts me…I mean personally. I want to hold back nothing…**unless its not helpful.** You know what I’m saying!? There are a thousand things I see, you and I see, and a thousand truths to give…but sometimes, what’s helpful, is to simply smile or embrace…BUT…sometimes what’s helpful is a full-on confrontation. How we need the Spirit of God to guide us, right!? Because in the midst of trying to help, God help me, help us to not ***harm.*** (Traffic story)
* And notice the testimony of Paul. Repentance **TOWARD** God! I just love that. Remember when you’ve failed, messed up royally or just realized you missed the mark on something…remember, ***God DOES NOT condemn you.*** He call you to Himself! Matthew 11:28, *Come to me all you who are doing well and really good in behavior and I will give you lollipops!* NO! Come all who are tired and weary…tired of what we’ve become and weary of what we’ve done…and I will give you **REST!**

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 22 – 24

* Paul was able to ***offer himself*** as an example to **encourage and inspire** the elders of the churches. Fellow believers. Are you? If not, what excuse do you have? If you’re *coming out of some sort of sin*, can you shine the light of Christ right there? Of course you can! If you’re a *brand-new believer* are you an example of what a new Christian should look like? Am I an example of what a pastor should look like? Are you an example of what a deacon should look like…a 20 year Christian…and on and on. Paul was able to offer himself as an example…***not of perfection but of one who repented toward God and walked by faith in Jesus!***

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 25 – 35

* (Verse 28 – Take heed to yourselves before the flock – *You must be filled in order to have something to give! Watch yourself lest you invite discouragement or even disqualification! Remember to be faithful to what God has entrusted to you.*) There is such wonderful wisdom in these words to those who would be **leaders** within the family of God. ***Declare the whole counsel of God***…not just the easy parts, the whole counsel of God. I like what Guzik says, *“Many preachers today simply use a Bible text as a launching pad, and then go on to say what they want – what the people want to hear. Others throw in Bible quotations to illustrate their points, or to illustrate their stories. Yet the real calling of a preacher is to simply let the Bible speak for itself and let it declare its own power.”*
* ***Shepherd the church***…we’re not here to teach or to lead only but also to tend, to serve and to love. Remember each person in this room was purchased by the Lord…they’re His.
* Don’t look to worldly success to build your identity…***you will be only built by the Word of His grace***…it’s God who will enable you. Don’t be in this for money…*come on man!* Work hard, support the church, support the weak and find that the greatest blessing will come and does come through giving. Giving of your resources, your worldly riches, your time, your heart…

Acts Chapter 20 Verses 36 – 38

* God is so good to give us people in our lives that love us. That His design is ***friendship and fellowship*** and His desire is that we each would have that not only with each other, but also with Him. God has never and will never forsake you…His is forever for you. Have you ever considered that the call of Jesus on the cross, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* That call by Jesus was so that no one else ever would have to make that call again…?