

Date: 23 August 2026

Theme: Building the Kingdom of God

Topic: The Servant's ministry: Testifying to the Gospel and Shepherding the flock

Passage: Acts 20

Key Verse: 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. (Acts 20:24 NKJV)

Introduction

By Acts 20:24, Paul had already spent years living out his calling through three missionary journeys. He had faced rejection, opposition, beatings, imprisonment, and even stoning. In Acts 19, Paul stayed in Ephesus for years, teaching despite opposition, confronting false religion, seeing lives transformed, and facing a public riot because the gospel threatened the culture and economy of the city.

So, when he said, "But none of these things move me," he was speaking from experience. Even with more suffering ahead, nothing would move him from the calling he had received from the Lord Jesus.

He believed he might never see the Ephesian elders again, and in those final words, Paul showed them not only what he believed, but how he had lived.

As we look at Acts 20, two important questions emerge:

- 1) What formed Paul's faithfulness?
- 2) How did Paul demonstrate that faithfulness?

1. Faithfulness formed through the journey

When Paul says, "But none of these things move me..." (V24), this was not empty confidence. His conviction had been built through years of seeing God's faithfulness, following the Spirit, and watching the gospel bear fruit.

a) By seeing God's faithfulness through every trial

- Paul had faced persecution, rejection, imprisonment and even stoning, yet God sustained him through it all. (Acts 14:19–22; Acts 16:22–26)
- Acts 14:19–22 — God sustained Paul after being stoned
 - Paul had seen God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering. Even after being stoned and left for dead, God preserved him and enabled him to continue his ministry. Through such trials, Paul learned that God would sustain him even when following Christ was costly.
- Acts 16:22–26 — God was faithful in prison
 - Paul experienced God's faithfulness even in prison. Though he was beaten and chained, God did not abandon him. Instead, God turned his suffering into an opportunity for the gospel, showing Paul that even difficult circumstances could serve God's purposes.

b) By following the Spirit's leading

- Paul did not allow closed doors, opposition or danger to determine his direction. He followed where the Spirit led. (Acts 16:6–10; Acts 20:22–23)

- In Acts 16:6–10, the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from going into certain regions and redirected him toward Macedonia.
 - Paul had to surrender his own plans and follow where the Spirit led. Through this, he learnt that closed doors were not necessarily setbacks but could be God’s way of directing him toward greater gospel opportunities. This experience strengthened Paul’s confidence to follow the Spirit even when the path ahead was uncertain.

c) By seeing the gospel fruit remain

- Through his obedience, people were saved, disciples were strengthened, churches were established, and the Word continued to spread. (Acts 13:48–49; Acts 14:21–23; Acts 19:20)
- Paul had seen again and again that his suffering was never wasted when he remained faithful to the gospel.

d) By shifting to eternal perspective.

- So, Paul could look at this life and see suffering, but looked beyond this life and saw purpose.
- He could see personal cost, but he saw something of greater eternal value — finishing what Jesus had given him to do. That eternal perspective kept him faithful.
- Can we learn to see what Paul could see — not only the cost ahead, but the calling beyond it?
- When our perspective changes, what once looked like an interruption may become part of the race God has called us to run.

2. Faithfulness expressed through testifying (Acts 20:17–27)

- The word “testify” carries the idea of giving witness. Paul was saying: My life must bear witness to what Jesus has done. How did he do that?

a) Testify with life

You know how I lived the whole time I was with you... I served the Lord with great humility and with tears and in the midst of severe testing... (Acts 20:18-19)

- Paul could say, “You know how I lived,” (V18) because his life supported the message he preached.
- He served with humility
 - Paul did not make ministry about himself.
 - When the people of Lystra wanted to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods, they tore their clothes and immediately pointed the people away from themselves to the living God. His life said: “Don’t look at me; look at God.” (Acts 14:11–15)
- He served with tears
 - Paul reminded the elders that for three years he had warned everyone “night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:31)
 - His tears showed that people were not projects to him. He genuinely cared about their spiritual lives.
- He served with severe testing
 - Paul was stoned at Lystra and left for dead. Yet he got up, went back into the city, and continued preaching. (Acts 14:19–21)

- After being beaten and imprisoned, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God. (Acts 16:22–25)

b) Testify with lip

I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks... (Acts 20:20-21)

I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. (Acts 20:27)

- Paul begins in verse 20 with “I have not hesitated...” and ends in verse 27 with the same words, “I have not hesitated...” This repetition shows Paul's determination not to hold back the truth.
- Paul did not hold back what people needed to hear.
 - He preached Christ clearly in Pisidian Antioch, tracing God’s work through Israel’s history and calling people to believe in Jesus. (Acts 13:16–41)
 - He reasoned from the Scriptures in Thessalonica, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise again. (Acts 17:2–3)
 - He did not merely speak what was popular; he spoke what was necessary.
- He taught publicly and from house to house.
 - He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath. (Acts 13-19)
 - He visited houses and taught groups of people. (Acts 20:8)
 - Disciple-making happened in larger gatherings, and through personal relationships.
- He declared repentance and faith.
 - He did not leave people with vague inspiration; he called them to a response.
 - Repentance means turning away from our old direction; faith means placing our trust in Jesus and following Him.
- He proclaimed the whole will of God.
 - He did not select only comfortable portions of scripture but proclaimed the whole truth of God’s words.
 - He warned about judgment, repentance, false teaching, suffering, and the cost of discipleship.

c) Shifting to eternal Perspective

Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. (Acts 20:26)

- Paul could leave Ephesus with a clear conscience because he had not held back — with his life or with his lips.
- Paul understood that he had a responsibility to faithfully warn and teach the people God had entrusted to him.
- Paul could not control whether people accepted or rejected the truth. But he could control whom he obeyed, spoke faithfully of and held nothing back.
- Our responsibility is to persuade man; the responsibility of the hearers is to believe.

3. Faithfulness is protecting the flock against predators (Acts 20:28-31)

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. (Acts 20:28)

a) Watch over the flock

Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

- Shepherds need to remember that the flock belongs to God and not to them.
- Paul's example in Acts 20:31 shows that watching over the flock requires long-term (3 years), consistent care (did not cease).
- Shepherding means knowing people, feeding people, guiding people, correcting people, and protecting people.
- Paul did not merely preach and leave. He returned, strengthened, taught, warned, appointed leaders and invested personally. (Acts 14:21–23)

b) Watch against distortion from the outside and inside

I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

- To distort means to bend something away from its true shape.
- "Savage wolves" refers to people who enter the church and harm the flock through false teaching. They may appear harmless, but their influence is destructive.
 - Elymas, the sorcerer, tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. (Acts 13:6-12)
- "From your own number" is even more sobering. The danger came from people already among them, and they aimed to gain followers for themselves.
- All who mentor another must build the habit of mastering the word of God. Only the truth can set them free from deception.

Application

- Testify with our life —What is one area I have tried to do?
- Testify with our lips — Who has God placed around me that I need to speak to more intentionally about Jesus or encourage with God's truth?
- Share one important habit you have tried that testifies for Jesus?