

—{1}. **Acts 20:36-38.** **It's All Right to Grieve**

A. Introduction

1. It Was August 5, 2001

- a. we were meeting next door in the then Aurora Seniors Centre
- b. there were only a few present that morning – the Gee's, Lynn, Mike, David Coulter, Anthea-Lea, Kevin, ourselves – thirteen in all, which was our average attendance for the previous month
- c. Maureen and I were feeling down – the likelihood of being able to get a pastor looked dim and as a result families had moved away to attend church elsewhere
- d. then in came a family – what led them to come to us I don't know – a young couple with two girls aged about 3½ and 1½ – Carlos, Nicole, Macy and Taylor Fast – why they came to us, I do not know except that it was of God, but I think one reason that they returned was one lady's taking time to make them feel very welcome
- e. certainly, the message that morning didn't sound very encouraging – I was preaching from Lamentations and the title? 'Those who Weep'
- f. that was our introduction to the man who after a time volunteering, then serving part-time, would become a pastor of this church
- g. today, our sermon title doesn't sound any more encouraging, 'It's All Right to Grieve,' because today we come full circle to say good-bye to this family, and join together for ...

2. A Pastor's Farewell —{2}.

- a. At a farewell dinner for a departing minister a tearful member said to him, "I don't know how we will manage without you, Reverend."
- b. "Oh, don't trouble yourself over it," said the minister humbly, "I'm sure the church will soon find a better man than I am."
- c. "That's what they all said last time," wailed the member, "but they just keep getting worse and worse!"

B. Paul's Farewell at Miletus

1. Paul Was Accustomed to Farewells

a. for example, his letters to the churches, close with farewells

(A) often with instructions such as in 1 Thessalonians 5:27, 'I adjure you by the Lord to have this letter read to all the brethren.'

(B) and usually with some variant of the following verse, 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.' (1 Thessalonians 5:28)

b. or in his partings from churches

(A) once let down in a basket from the wall of Damascus, because of a Jewish plot to kill him (Acts 9:23-25)

(B) sometimes, thrown out of town as it were in Lystra, being stoned and dragged out of town as dead, but after saying farewell to the believers there, he left on his next mission (Acts 14:19-20)

(C) sometimes, as here in Acts 20, with a farewell message

(1) I will not embarrass Pastor Carlos by pointing them out

(2) but take notice how his ministry with us has run parallel to that of Paul at Ephesus – so that we can legitimately respond to his and his family's leaving as the elders did to Paul's

2. Paul's Testimony of His Ministry at Ephesus

a. the faithfulness of Paul's ministry among them – vv 17-21

(A) there was the constancy of his ministry – 'the whole time' – 18

(B) there was the care of his manner – 'with ... humility ... tears' – 19

(C) there was the completeness of his method – 'declaring what was profitable ... teaching ... publicly ... house to house'

(D) there was the consistency of his message – 'faith in ... Christ' – 21

b. the prospect now laying before him – vv 22-24

(A) for Paul is headed to Jerusalem – by God's leading, but to just exactly what he does not know

(B) but he knows he faces bonds and afflictions – these do not matter

(C) this is all part of the ministry to which Paul was called as even was made known to Ananias at the time of his conversion: '... Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the

Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake.' (Acts 9:15-16)

- c. he can leave them with a clear conscience – vv 25-27, 31b
 - (A) he has preached the gospel so none can accuse him on that score
 - (B) he leaves, having declared the whole counsel of God
 - (C) and 24/7 for 3 years has tearfully admonished; corrected
- d. a warning to them against false teachers – vv 28-31a
 - (A) and even in leaving his care for them will continue
 - (B) absent though he will be in the body, he will be present in spirit
- e. commendation to follow his example 32-35
 - (A) continue to be built up in God's word
 - (B) he had not laboured for money as a hireling, but in accordance with the manner and instruction of Jesus Christ Himself
- f. thus he concluded his farewell message
 - (A) and knelt and prayed with them
 - (B) and they wept; and they kissed him; and they grieved; and they saw him off to his ship; and he left.

C. What Is the Nature of Such Grief?

1. Grief Is an Expression of

a. Loss

- (A) we most normally associate grief with death of a loved one
- (B) but even then we who are Christians recognize with Paul '[... about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.](#)' (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
- (C) for there can be grief of a loss beyond this, as Paul recounts, '[I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, ...](#)' (Romans 9:1-4)

b. Love

(A) it is how we are put together as individuals to express love

(B) it is how we are put together as a body of believers, that we should care the one for the other; that we 'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.' (Romans 12:15)

c. Dependence

(A) the Ephesian elders felt their loss; now and in the future, that they would never again see Paul face to face

(B) perhaps dependence sounds like a selfish reason

(C) but we grieve because we are losing a person – and in our case today as a church, a family – who fills a void and need in our life

d. Honour

(A) these elders expressed their grief to Paul as a token of the honour they accorded to him on account of his person and ministry

(B) let us express ours to honour what the Fast's mean to us

2. Grief and God's Will

a. but, we know that as Paul was headed to Jerusalem – and what else he did not know – under the directive will of God, so also Carlos and Nicole, Macy and Taylor are headed to Georgia – and what else they do not know – under the directive will of God

b. so, should we grieve if they are doing God's will?

c. certainly! because such expression of grief as just described does not negate our acceptance of the will of God for them and for us

d. Jeremiah accepted the will of God in what God was doing and going to do to Jerusalem for their sin, but that did not mean that he was wrong in expressing his grief at the suffering of God's people, both in his book of prophecy as well as his songs of Lamentations

e. The writer of Psalms 42, 43 was right to express his grief at being in a desert spiritually, even while admonishing himself three times, 'Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.' (Psalms 43:5)

f. Messiah was to be '... A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ...' (Isaiah 53:3 NAS95) – He

understands the nature of our grief

g. even at the tomb of Lazarus, who was about to be raised from death, Jesus wept, expressing God's own sympathy for our grief

D. Conclusion

1. the Arabs have a proverb that says, 'All sunshine makes a desert.' Everyone enjoys the sun, but if the sun always shines everything will dry up and die. There are certain things which only the rains will produce, and there are certain experiences which only sorrow can bring about. Mourning and grief will come into our lives, and if we are going to grow, they must come. ^{3}.
2. in this life people are sent by God into our lives to enrich them, and for us to enrich theirs – there is no sin when we grieve upon our parting, even though it be only for a while, for in it we are expressing our loss, love, dependence and honour to them – today let us do so to Carlos, Nicole, Macy and Taylor.

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2. 'They Just Keep Getting Worse', Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements – Kerux illustration 8451
3. Quote of William Barclay by Pastor David Holwick – from Kerux illustrations #2475