



Sent – Part 13 **Paul's Legacy**

Last week in Part 12 of Sent, we read Acts 17:16-34. Having been supernaturally delivered from prison in Philippi, Paul once again found himself in hot water and was run out of the town of Thessalonica. Coming to the city of Athens in what is modern-day Greece, Paul entered the center of culture in the ancient Roman world to await his compatriots. Paul's discourse with the Stoics and Epicureans at the Areopagus demonstrated how to deliver the Gospel effectively according to the specific cultural context and how to take our personal Christian walk into the public.

This week in Part 13 of Sent, we will read Acts 20:16-38. As we near the end of our series in the book of Acts, Paul's final missionary journey sees him address the elders of the Ephesian church. In his speech, we see what could be considered within the book a kind of farewell address for Paul who consciously speaks to his legacy as a follower of Christ. If we want to leave behind a legacy that matters for eternity, we need to live for Jesus now, just

like Paul did. Our current affections, priorities, and habits will determine what our legacy will be.

BELONG

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

- How is everyone's week going? Any life updates?
- What is something the group can be praying about?
- What is something the group can praise this week?

- What do you see as your specific purpose in life?
- What is something that you consistently practice?
- Who are those you care about most?

BELIEVE

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

Certainty of Purpose

Paul begins his speech to the elders of the Ephesian church in this way:

Acts 21:18-21 (ESV)

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul’s purpose for his life was crystal clear in his mind: serving the Lord. He did not live to make money or to gain accolades throughout his ministry, but to serve God and Him alone. Looking across Paul’s letters, this is his central self-description.

Romans 1:1 (ESV)

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

Philippians 1:1 (ESV)

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with
the overseers and deacons:

Galatians 1:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man?

If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Repeatedly, Paul defines himself as a servant of Christ Jesus. Notice that Paul's servanthood involved telling people about Jesus. He did not 'shrink from declaring you anything,' but rather was willing to die for the sake of the message of the Gospel. In Paul's case, he constantly flirted with death, but upon arriving in Jerusalem after this meeting, he would be arrested, and finally executed in Rome.

Consistency of Practice

Legacy is not defined by spectacular moments, but the consistency with which you practice what you say you believe. In a culture obsessed with the spectacular and the sensational, we have to remember that flashes in the pan do not equal a life well-lived. Returning to verses 18-21, Paul says that for 'the whole time' of his ministry he went 'from house to house' and did not cease 'night or day.'

Legacy is defined by consistent, repetitive, and Christ-honoring commitment like this. If you want to live a life that honors God, don't start by looking for the big moments. Instead, start doing the basic things that honor Christ and show him to the world. Once you've done this, do it again. And continue to do it, over and over and over again until those things define your life.

One of the biggest hinderances to the work of the church going forward is the inconsistency of the people in the pews.

Concern for Others

People who leave a legacy learn to love others like Christ loved us. At the end of his speech, Paul says:

Acts 20:35 (ESV)

³⁵ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the

weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

The message of putting others before yourself was displayed most prominently by Christ both in his earthly ministry, and ultimately His willingness to die on a cross for us. The specific phrase 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' is a saying of Jesus that is

only recorded here in Acts 20:35. It is not found in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, but it does echo His teachings in other passages of Scripture.

Luke 6:38 (ESV)

³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together,
running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

Choosing to serve Christ now through giving is an investment in the eternal reward we will receive in Heaven. Further, how we treat people in this life is a measure of how well we know and serve Christ according to Jesus Himself.

BECOME

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we've learned and applying it.

- What do you feel God is specifically calling you to in your life?
 - In what ways are you taking advantage of local opportunities to discern what God's purpose in your life is?
- One of the biggest hinderances to the church is inconsistency. What can you do practically to remain more consistent in your God-given callings as a Christian?
- If you're being honest, would you say you have a concern for others that is like Christ's concern for us?
 - If you knew with certainty that serving others would cost you something, like your life, would you still go where you were called?