

READ

Acts 20:13-38

CONSIDER

These days many of my friends are caught up in a frenzy of going on cruise vacations. Their eyes lit up as they recount how interesting and carefree it is to go on cruises that take them to different places, visiting towns and countries one after another, all on one trip. Did it ever occur to you that Apostle Paul was also making land and sea trips in his days?

This Sunday we come to Acts 20:13-38 that takes us to near the end of Paul's 3rd missionary journey. He had travelled from place to place first on land in Asia Minor, then by sea over to Macedonia and Greece, finally making his way back to Jerusalem. The trip was most eventful but far from carefree. Paul had one mission: to proclaim Christ and the good news of salvation. Everywhere he went, he gathered believers, set up churches and appointed (ordained) elders and overseers to build the church (Titus 1:5-7). As the ship came into port at Meletus, about 40 miles south of Ephesus, something was weighing heavy on his mind. Paul had stayed previously in Ephesus for three years and worked closely with the elders of the church. He knew that there would only be hardship waiting for him in Jerusalem and he could never visit or see them again. "Compelled by the Spirit" (20:22), he sent for the elders of the church in Ephesus (20:17).

Let us stop and think for a minute: If you know that this is the last time you could see your loved ones face to face and that you would never see them again, be it your children, your spouse or dearest friends, what last words would you say to them? What would you want to tell them and to remember from you? Most likely Paul was thinking about these when he met these dear friends from Ephesus.

Three times Paul repeated the words "you know..... you know..., you know...."(v.18, 20, 34). Basically, he was saying, "you know me, you know what kind of person I was and how I lived. All these can attest to my integrity, trustworthiness, and what I am going to tell you." What can we learn about Paul? If you were to declare about your faith and trustworthiness to people who know you, what can you add to "you know, you know" so they will pay attention to your words? Are your behaviours and the way you live consistent with your faith?

Then Paul forcefully and passionately asserted his words, three times using the words "I know" to validate the urgency and importance of these things. Directly concerning church and church leaders, he urged them to keep watch over themselves and over the people and the church that God had entrusted them to oversee. And he warned them about the dangers of attacks not only from outside of church but also from within themselves. He urged them to "keep watch", "be shepherds of the church", and "be on guard". Can you think of some present time examples of "savage wolves" and things "from your own number" that "attack and distort the truth", dangers and troubles prowling or lurking to tear down the church and the faith of Christ followers?

From v. 23 "I only know...", Paul knew very well what lay ahead. There would only be hardship and trouble waiting for him. "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me" (v.24). Reflect on Paul's words and your own

life journey. How has God shaped you and led you to this point in life? Do you know what task the Lord has given you?

"When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed." (20:36) What are the challenges that you are facing today? Apart from praying on your own, find someone to share and pray with you on what you learn from this passage.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb 4:16)

(Please do not hesitate to approach our pastors, deacons or leadership team to pray with you)

Deacon Josephine Chow

PRAY

Lord Jesus, help me to finish the race and complete the task you have given me.

O Most High, Glorious God, enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me

a right faith,

a certain hope

and a perfect love, understanding and knowledge,

O Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command. Amen.

Francis of Assisi

DIVING DEEPER

Read Acts 20:13-38

- v. 18-21, 34-35 Paul framed his message with three "you know", why, what does this tell us? What can we learn about Paul from these verses?
- v. 22-24 What emotion can you pick up from these words of Paul? How do you think Paul was feeling? How did Paul see his life? What can we learn from Paul?
- v. 23-32 Paul framed this section with 3 "I know". List out what he knew and all the instructions and warnings that Paul gave to these leaders.

Can you name some examples of present day "savage wolves", "from your own number... arise and distort the truth" that are bombarding and attacking Christian churches and pulling disciples away from church?

What advice and instructions did Paul give us? How do we put these to practice?

- v.36-38 Imagine the scene of Paul and the church leaders from Ephesus saying goodbye to one another. Paul with all of them knelt down and prayed. Consider how you can put into practice praying with others for one another's burden and for Church.

"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Heb 4:16)