

083 - Weeping for a While- Acts 20:36-38 2013-09-08

Call to Worship: Psalm 30:4-5

Scripture Reading: Ruth 1:1-9

Sermon: "Weeping for a While" Acts 20:25; 36-38

Benediction: Psalm 126:3-6

Act 20:25 "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more."

Acts 20:36-38 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. (37) Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, (38) sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

INTRODUCTION

We all know very well that there are painful partings in this life. There are people whom we love and with whom we have lived in a close relationship, from whom we are torn away, for one reason or another.

Some of these partings are wholesome and good, and right in line with what God created us for:

- a baby is born into a family; he spends twenty years in that family, growing dearer and dearer to his parents and his brothers and sisters; but when he finds a wife, he leaves his father and his mother, and cleaves to his wife

Other partings are also good, in obedience to God's commands for making disciples of every nation:

- a church sends one of its pastors to preach the gospel in another city, maybe in another country on the other side of the world

Other partings are indirectly the result of sin, the various effects sin has on the world:

- a man's business or job doesn't work out well in one place, and he has to move his family to another state or country to earn their living

Other partings are directly the result of sin, as some dark betrayal finds

- a brother driving his brother away in murderous anger, or
- a husband leaving his wife and children from adulterous lust, or
- a business partner cheating his friend from greed for money.

Then, of course, there is the parting of death, which we earned for ourselves when we sinned against God in Adam, in the garden of Eden.

- a baby is born sick or deformed, and dies in his mother's arms a few minutes later
- a child succumbs to a childhood disease, or dies suddenly in a tragic accident
- a young adult's foolishness and recklessness sends himself and his friends to an early grave
- a young man dies fighting in his country's wars
- a young mother dies in childbearing
- a seemingly-healthy husband and father or wife and mother hears the dreaded word "cancer" from the doctor, and soon leaves his grieving family behind
- an old couple, married 50 or 60 years, finds finally what it means "til death do us part," and one is left alone in the house
- a beloved grandpa or grandma grows weaker and weaker, until the last breath is drawn, and only the empty shell is left

All such partings are painful parts of this life, and many of them find us weeping, and feeling as if our insides are all torn to pieces.

Christians are not exempt from such partings, nor are we immune from their painful effects. On the contrary, because we are so very dear to each other, in ways the world does not know, partings of Christians can be even more painful than those of their people of the world.

Paul and the Ephesian elders experienced such a parting, as recorded at the end of Acts chapter 20. Let us read what the Holy Spirit of Christ has left for us here in the story of that parting, and consider what help is here provide for us, as we face the painful partings of our lives.

Read the text: Acts 20:25; 36-38

I. How they conducted themselves

A. They prayed

- kneeling
- together

B. They wept

- "freely" or "sore"

C. They embraced

- hugged
- kissed

-e.g. my own dad

-as a kid, giving my dad a kiss every evening at bedtime was something I did, but with little feeling; I even resented it sometimes

-but when I grew up, and moved away from him, I found myself happy to give him a kiss at good-bye

-when he was sick with cancer, I found I kissed his face very fondly, especially when I perceived it would be the last time

D. They stayed together as long as possible

II. Where their hope was: it was not in their family or friends in this life, but in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself in the life to come

A. Paul had preached to them of the Lord Jesus (Acts 20:21)

B. Paul had taught them that Lord Jesus had bought them with His own blood (Acts 20:28)

C. Therefore Paul's hope, and their hope, was not ultimately in themselves or in each other. They were dear to each other, and the elders had depended on Paul, but their faith was not in Paul. It was in God's providence, and in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

D. There is reason to comfort one another, so that we do not sorrow as the world does, without hope

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 (13) But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no

hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

E. There is reason to be steadfast in the work of the Lord, not swayed from it by the pain of painful partings:

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY." (55) "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING? O HADES, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY?" (56) The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

So, then, as we face the painful partings of this life, let us consider how Paul and the Ephesian elders conducted themselves, and let us consider that our hope is not in Christian friends and family, but in the Lord Jesus Himself, who is sure to come back for us, that we may be with Him forever, never to part