

## **I CONSIDER MY LIFE WORTH NOTHING TO TESTIFY TO THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S GRACE**

**(PAUL'S SECOND AND THIRD MISSION JOURNEY)**

Acts 15,36-21,39

Key Verse 20,24

“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 - the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.”

Thanks be to the Lord that in this year we may study the book of Acts in seven lectures. The book of Acts shows us how God works mightily through the witnesses of Jesus Christ, who follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to the ends of the earth.

In the previous lesson, we learned about the untamable mission spirit of apostle Paul, who fought in the midst of persecution to preach the gospel in every city as the light of the Gentiles. May God equip each of us with the power of the Holy Spirit to be a light of the Gentiles for the young people on campus and to experience the great revival work in Europe in this generation.

In today's lecture, through the 2nd and 3rd mission journey, we learn about Paul’s burning shepherd's heart, with which he served the mission work in Europe. Apostle Paul considered his life worth nothing if only he could obey the sovereign guidance of the Holy Spirit and fulfill the task given by his Lord and Christ Jesus to be a witness of the gospel for the salvation of the lost people in Europe, Rome, and to the ends of the earth. What is our life purpose for which we, as the witnesses of Jesus Christ, may devote our entire lives? May God abundantly bless our clear life decision to be witnesses of the gospel of the grace of God to the ends of the earth and continue writing Acts chapter 29.

**Part 1: Come over to Macedonia and help us (15:36-18:22)**

Let us take a look at 15:36: “Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing.’” In chapter 15, Paul had participated in the Apostle’s council in Jerusalem, where the spiritual unity between Gentile and Jewish Christians was restored. Paul's heart burned for the gentile believers of the still young churches, so that he could no longer hesitate, but wanted to revisit them as soon as possible to encourage them spiritually. For this, Paul found Silas to be a suitable world mission coworker, full of mission spirit, who was willing to give his life completely for preaching the Gospel. Already at the council in Jerusalem, God used Silas as one of the defenders of the gospel for the gentile mission (15:25-27) and as an excellent Bible teacher who encouraged and strengthened the believers (15:32). Together, they strengthened the churches in Syria, Cilicia, Derbe and Lystra. When the churches were strengthened in the faith in the saving grace of their Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit worked among them so that the churches grew daily in numbers.

But the Holy Spirit hindered them from entering the province of Asia and did not allow them to enter Bithynia. Hence, they passed through Mysia and came down to the coastal city of Troas, asking themselves, “Where does the Holy Spirit lead us if not to Asia and Bithynia?”

Let us read 16:9: “During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’” Through this vision, Paul saw the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the gentile mission: God's heart counted for the salvation of the lost souls in Europe! Paul was to receive God's burning shepherd heart and take the next step in world mission, to follow God’s call and from now on be a light of the gospel for the salvation of the lost people in Europe. Paul did not waste any time and without delay obeyed the guidance of the Holy Spirit by leaving with Silas for Europe as quickly as possible.

What did Paul and Silas do when they arrived in Philippi? On Sabbath, they went to the river, where they expected to find a place of prayer. There they met a God-fearing purple merchant named Lydia, and God opened

her heart. Lydia came to faith in Jesus and was baptized and invited the apostles to come to her house. Lydia's house thus became the meeting place of the church and the first mission base camp in Europe. These day's the angle of the Muslims shouts: "Come over and help us!" Thank God for the house church of missionary Point who faithfully serve as a base camp for M mission in Istanbul!

Paul also healed a slave girl in Philippi who had an evil spirit with which she predicted the future. The lords of the maid, whose source of profit was now gone, seized Paul and Silas before the city magistrates, so that they were beaten, flogged and thrown into the innermost cell in the prison. But Paul and Silas were not discouraged in the face of afflictions. They prayed and praised God! They participated in the sufferings of Christ with joy and confidence in victory, probably singing the following hymn of praise: "Praise and Thanks, Praise and Thanks, Praise and Thanks, God's children always have praise and thanks! Every woe was made good by the saviour's blood! Praise and Thanks, Praise and Thanks, Praise and Thanks, God's children always have Praise and Thanks!" (Song No. 416) Then God brought about the marvelous salvation work through the power of the Holy Spirit – through an earthquake. The earthquake opened all prison doors. The prison jailer saw no other option than to kill himself to evade punishment. That is the thanks of the world for a life-long of service. But Paul shouted out loudly: "Do not harm yourself!" and testified to him the gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household." (16:31) This man accepted Jesus and was filled with joy because he and his whole family had come to believe in God and could now live a truly blessed life because of the grace of Christ Jesus.

Encouraged by the work of the Holy Spirit in Philippi, they moved on to Thessalonica and preached the gospel there. They experienced the great work of God among the God-fearing Greek and quite a few prominent women (16:4). But they also experienced great riot and persecution there, and were sent by the disciples to Berea. Later, Apostle Paul dedicated two of his letters to the believers in Thessalonica.

Let us read chapter 17:11-12: “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men.” The hearts of the people in Berea were like the good soil that bears fruit 30, 60, 100 times. They eagerly studied and examined the Word of God daily and changed their lives towards obedience to the Word of God. When Paul and Silas, despite persecution, followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit for Europe mission work under all circumstances, the Holy Spirit worked powerfully: In both cities, quite a few of the prominent, intellectually educated people came to faith in Jesus.

Athens was one of the cultural capitals of the Roman Empire and thus full of idols and idolatry. When Paul saw this, out of his burning shepherd heart he could not stay quiet, but preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to challenge the Athenians to repentance. When one person with God’s burning shepherd’s heart testified to the gospel even in such an environment hostile to God, the Holy Spirit worked so that even in Athens, the remnant disciples of Jesus such as Dionysius and Damaris were raised.

Paul now came to Corinth, the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. God gave him the house church of Priscilla and Aquila as mission coworkers. He worked with them as a tentmaker, while at the same time teaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in the synagogue. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia and joined Paul in Corinth, Paul fully devoted himself to preaching the word of God and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ. When the Jews opposed Paul, he left the synagogue and went to the house of Titius Justus. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed in the Lord and many Corinthians also believed and were baptized.

Up until this point, Paul had fought the good spiritual fight of faith for pioneering Europe amidst various afflictions. But he was not a superman either. He became tired amidst tribulations. Paul was overcome with fear during this time because in every city, he sensed the repeated, ever growing and more and more radical opposition and attacks. Should he even

leave Corinth before the persecutors struck again against him and God's ministry? Paul needed God's comfort and encouragement.

Let us read 18:9-10: "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." The Lord Himself appeared to Paul in a dream and encouraged him! The Lord encouraged Paul not to be afraid or withdraw, but to continue to be a courageous witness of the gospel. Paul was to regain victorious certainty that God was always with him, protecting him and fulfilling his sovereign counsel through him. God revealed to him that he had many people in this city and that he had already prepared the great revival work among the Corinthians. Then Paul was able to to serve the pioneering work in Corinth for 18 more months, and many came to faith in Jesus.

Boniface, a young priest from England, heard God's call: "Boniface, come over to the gentiles in Germany and help us!" Boniface did not hesitate: with God's burning shepherd's heart, he followed God's call and went to the "barbarian" gentiles, of whom everyone was afraid. The Holy Spirit brought about the great revival work that through Boniface also called the "Apostle to the Germans" all of Germany was evangelized with the gospel.

Kyryl and Methodius who were brothers also heard God's call in 863 by Rastislav of Moravia: "Come over to the gentile slavs and help us!" They devised the Galgolithic alphabet and translated the bible into the Slavic language and ministered to the Slavs in their native language rather than Latin. They are regarded as "Apostles to the Slavs".

In this spiritually dark times there are many intellectual campus students who are searching for a clear purpose in life and who long for a shepherd who comes over to them and helps them spiritually. God is also calling us: "Come over to the young students, starting with the universities in Bonn, Mainz, Rhein-Sieg, Istanbul, Ankara and at 1700 universities in Germany and Europe, and help us!" In this summer semester 2025, let us experience the powerful work of the Holy Spirit by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses of Jesus Christ under all circumstances.

From Corinth Paul returned to Antioch. Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus, and he left them there. Paul had a great vision for Ephesus to be the next mission base camp for Asia Minor and for Europe. In particular, Priscilla and Aquila served Apollos, a learned man with thorough knowledge of the scripture, through Bible study, so that he was raised as a powerful witness of Jesus Christ (18:24-28).

The work of the Holy Spirit in Europe happened when one person, apostle Paul, firmly followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be a witness of Jesus. May God use each one of us to follow and obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit and be determined witnesses of Jesus on campus and Europe as a shepherd nation and a missionary-sending continent to send out 100,000 missionaries unto the ends of the earth by 2041. Amen!

## **Part 2: I consider my life worth nothing to me (18:23-21:39)**

Let us look at chapter 18:23: "After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples." After Paul had remained in Antioch for some time, his burning vision led him to set out for his third mission journey, passing through Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples. Then, as he had intended in his faith, he moved back to Ephesus, where he found 12 disciples whom he baptized in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Let us read chapter 19:8-9: "Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus." As he had done in the 1st and 2nd mission journey, Paul went to the synagogue every day for 3 months to preach the gospel freely and openly to everyone who came and listened to him. But again, Paul experienced persecution, that some with stubborn hearts became obstinate, refused to believe and openly slandered the gospel.

What did Paul do? On this 3rd mission journey, Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, learned about the secrets of discipleship ministry through intensive Bible study. From now on, Paul made the decision to raise up determined disciples of Jesus, whom God could use as spiritual leaders and Bible teachers. Paul made a clear decision from now on, to devote his whole life to the intensive discipleship ministry through Bible study. He founded ELEF. First, he took with him the few disciples who were willing to learn God's work through the gospel of Christ Jesus and to dedicate their lives as Bible teachers and coworkers for world mission. Secondly, Paul spoke to them daily in the Lecture Hall of Tyrannus. "Daily" means that he studied God's Word in the Bible with the disciples every day through word- and prayer fellowship. Paul helped his disciples to observe and interpret the Word of God according to the IBS method and to apply it to their practical lives through personal struggle with the Word of God. Paul fought tirelessly even in the nights for raising them as disciples and excellent Bible teachers and spiritual leaders, exhorting the few of them day and night in prayers and tears (20:31).

Let's read verse 10: "This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." What marvelous work of the Holy Spirit happened when Paul dedicated his whole life to raise up just few disciples as followers of Jesus Christ through intensive Bible study? Within two years, everybody who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord! Through Paul's ELEF disciple making ministry, these few disciples grew into responsible shepherds, excellent Self-Executive Bible Teachers (SEBTs) and global spiritual leaders who pioneered the other cities in Asia Minor with the same burning shepherd heart and mission spirit. Among them, there were Tychicus and Trophimus, who through intensive bible study grew as devoted world mission coworkers who accompanied Paul all the way to Rome (20:4.5; 21:29). Through the healing ministry, many people were freed from their evil spirits and reborn to a new life for Christ. The evil spirit overpowered the sons of Sceva, who abused the Holy Spirit, so that all people were filled with the fear of the Lord and praised the name of Jesus. The sorcerers who had become believers of Christ burned all their magic books worth 50,000 drachmas; that is equal to 138 years' wages or 10 million euros! Now they had made the clear life decision to be determined witnesses of Christ, to

surrender their new lives completely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and live with God's grace of devoting their lives for God's mission. Not even the uproar and the riot of Demetrius could hinder this city of idolatry from being transformed into a world mission headquarter that could be preciously used for the spiritual conquest of Asia Minor and beyond!

Let us look at chapter 19:21: "After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. 'After I have been there,' he said, 'I must visit Rome also.'" When Paul experienced the work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesus, he received an even greater vision for Rome mission! Through intensive Bible study and discipleship ministry, Rome mission is possible! Let's make RLEF! And even Spain LEF! (Rom 15:24). Wow! The discipleship ministry of one person Paul, who followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit, became the decisive turning point in the book of Acts, that starting from Ephesus the gospel could spread throughout Asia Minor and even spiritually conquer the world capital Rome!

But why did Paul first wanted to return to Jerusalem by all means instead of going straight to Rome or enjoying God's mighty work in Ephesus and Europe? Paul wanted to bring the contribution of the churches in Achaia and Macedonia for the poor among the Lord's people in Jerusalem who were suffering from severe famine (Rom 15:24-26). In doing so, he wanted to express that the Gentile Christians, as debtors of the grace of Jesus Christ, showed their gratitude to the Jewish Christians. Paul knew that persecution by the Jews awaited him in Jerusalem; but he was willing and determined to give his life to build the bridge for the spiritual unity between Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Let us take a look at chapter 20:17.18: "From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them: "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia." Because Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem in time for the Day of Pentecost, he decided to "skip" Ephesus. After encouraging the believers in Troas until late night, he made a stopover in Miletus. There, Paul invited the spiritual leaders of Ephesus come to him to say farewell words and pass on his spiritual legacy to them.

In his farewell speech, Paul testified to his shepherd' life with which he had served them. From the first day until this day, he had dedicated his whole life to faithfully serve God's flock with great humility and in tears, even during trials and persecutions. Paul had served them no matter what the cost as a shepherd and Bible teacher who taught them everything helpful to them and preached the gospel of turning back to God in repentance and planting the faith of Jesus Christ in them.

Let's take a look at 20:22.23: "And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me." Paul knew very well that chains and afflictions awaited him everywhere.

Let's read the key verse from 20:24: "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace." Here we can see Paul's life attitude and consequential life of faith based on the grace of God. Paul himself had experienced the gospel of God's grace, which had changed him from a raging persecutor of the Christians to God's chosen instrument. Because God's wonderful grace is so precious, Paul's only aim of life was to fulfil God's counsel and the holy task that Jesus had given to him, to "proclaim the name of Jesus to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel". Paul testified in his letter to the Philippians: "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 3:7)

Paul consequently preached the gospel in every city until this very day even amidst persecution and devoted his life day and night to the spiritual growth of his disciples and to building the body of Christ. Now, Paul was determined to testify to the gospel of God's grace as a witness of Jesus all the way to Rome and even to the ends of the earth.

Let us read chapter 20:28 together: "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." What spiritual direction did he give the elders of Ephesus in his farewell address? Firstly,

Paul exhorted the spiritual leaders of Ephesus to keep watch over themselves by holding on to what they had learned from Paul. Secondly, he reminded them of God's holy calling to live as shepherds for the church of God with the word of God and serve God's flock. Paul knew that after he would leave savage wolves and false teachers would rise who would try to draw away the disciples. Look at 20:31: "So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears." Paul encouraged and exhorted the spiritual leaders of the church in Ephesus to follow his role model and victorious example of faith by spiritually being on guard and devoting their life to grow and protect the disciples of Christ. With the words "It is more blessed to give than to receive" he bid them a sincere farewell and boarded the ship towards Jerusalem.

My parents, M. Dr. Peter and M. Sarah, considered their whole life, the PhD title, and career opportunities worth nothing if only they could follow the one and only, most important calling and holy counsel of God to be witnesses of the good news of God's grace to the young campus students in Germany and Europe. God blessed their life devotion to campus mission and worked mightily by raising many native spiritual leaders and influential Bible teachers such as Sh. Peter S., Sh. Jochen S. and Sh. Warmherz E., and many more, also next-generation missionaries such as M. Dr. Petrus Chang, Sh. Dr. Johannes Chang and Sh. Peter Ryu, and many more, through the intensive Bible study and disciple-making ministry. In the time of persecution, affliction and trials, they held on to God's grace and mission with Phil 1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." Until this day, they consider their life worth nothing if only they can fully devote themselves to mobilize the next generation as global spiritual leaders, that they may be witnesses of Jesus Christ even in the M-world.

From apostle Paul and my parents I can learn to keep my life worth nothing in order to complete the task the Lord has given me by his grace. By God's grace I am saved from my sins of worldly desires that only lead to fruits of death. Now I can live a new life with many wonderful fruits of faith. By God's grace I can serve God's ministry with a wonderful woman of faith, Msn. Pauline Chang, who has devoted her life to fulfill God's mission. By God's grace I can live and co-work with so many mission co-workers like

you and like Msn. Point and his family to fulfill the task that God has given us for the spiritual revival in Germany, Europe and the M world. The world is flattering me. But the task God has given me, is as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation missionary, to inherit the spiritual heritage from my parents and to pass it on to the next generation. It is also to testify the good news of God's grace, in Bonn University and even until the ends of the earth. The task that God has given me is to be a bible teacher like Esra for the spiritual revival in Germany and Europe. I repent that I was often hindered and unwilling to dedicate myself to God's will because I kept my life, my will, my opinions, my emotions, my goals and desires, even my money, which BTW is not even my money but God's money, worth something. So does my great, outstanding and so hard-working son, Samuel Abraham, whose message I can deliver to you today almost unaltered and whom by God's grace I can be proud of and thank God for every day. I pray for Samuel and myself, that we may remember God's grace and that we may learn from Jesus and so many great servants of God to keep our own lives worth nothing to dedicate ourselves to the task that the Lord Jesus has given to us by his grace. May through our decision of faith God use us to testify the good news of God's grace at Bonn medical faculty and even until the ends of the earth and pass on the precious spiritual heritage to the next generation.

In chapter 21, we learn about the further course of Paul's return journey to Jerusalem. In Tyre and Ptolemais, the disciples urged him not to go to Jerusalem. Let us read chapter 21:13: "Then Paul answered, 'Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'" Paul testified to his martyr spirit, with which he was ready to give his life if only the united body of Christ Jesus could be formed between the Gentiles and Jewish Christians. Finally, he came to Jerusalem, where he was seized by the Jews, arrested and put in chains by the Romans. It was the beginning of the fulfillment of God's counsel for the Rome mission that the gospel could be preached from Rome to the ends of the earth.

In this lesson we learn that the Holy Spirit brings about the great revival work through one person who follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be a witness of the good news of the grace of God. May God fill each one of us with His burning shepherd heart that in this year 2025 we may devote

ourselves to intensive Bible study and disciple making ministry and raise up the young people at 1700 campuses in Europe as spiritual leaders, shepherds and Bible teachers. May God richly bless your wholehearted life decision and your life devotion to testify to the good news of God's grace, and through the power of his holy spirit to bring about a great spiritual revival in Germany, Europe, the M-world, the online world and continue writing Acts chapter 29.