

7/19/26  
**8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**For Group Meetings from July 12<sup>th</sup> – July 18<sup>th</sup>**

**OUR MISSION:** As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

**Prayer of the Day:** Gracious God, by your word of grace you strengthen and sustain your people. Give us courage to follow where you lead, faith to trust your care, and generous hearts to serve others; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:**

**Share:** How did last week's scripture (Acts 16:16-34) work in your life this week?

**Mission:**

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

**Hear:** Acts 20:17-38

**Explore Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What does Paul say awaits him in Jerusalem?
2. What warning does Paul give the elders about the future?
3. How do the elders respond to Paul's farewell?

**Connect Questions:** (Use these or develop your own.)

1. What do you hope people will say about the way you lived your life?
2. Who has been a faithful mentor in your life? What qualities made them particularly helpful to you?
3. What takes up most of your energy right now? Does it reflect what matters most to you?

**Memorize this verse:** "But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace." (Acts 20:24) When have you experienced/received/witnessed grace recently?

**BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:**

**Obey:** During this week follow through on your intentions.

**Meditate:** Meditate on Psalm 78:1-7. How does this speak into your life?

**Reflect:** What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

## Notes for ChristCare leaders:

This is one of those passages that reminds us that the Christian faith is always carried in relationships before it's carried in institutions. Before there were church buildings or denominational structures, there were people who had shared meals, shed tears, prayed together, and proclaimed the good news alongside one another. That's what makes this farewell so moving. Paul isn't leaving a congregation he occasionally visited. He's saying goodbye to people he loves. And notice that Paul's final words are not about preserving his legacy. They're about pointing beyond himself. "I commend you to God and to the word of his grace." Paul knows he cannot protect the church forever. He cannot be present for every challenge or settle every dispute. The future of the church does not depend on Paul's strength but on God's faithfulness.

That is good news, because we often imagine that everything depends on us. Parents feel responsible for every outcome in their children's lives. Leaders feel as though every decision rests on their shoulders. Churches sometimes act as though their future depends on finding the perfect pastor, the perfect program, or the perfect strategic plan. Paul reminds us otherwise. Faithful leadership doesn't mean making yourself indispensable. It means helping people discover that God is. That doesn't make leadership easy. Paul is remarkably honest about the cost. He speaks of tears, trials, opposition, and uncertainty. He knows suffering awaits him in Jerusalem, yet he keeps going. Because he has discovered something more compelling than safety. "I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God's grace." Notice where that sentence ends: not with sacrifice, courage, or perseverance, but with grace. Grace is the destination. Grace is the message worth giving your life to. Paul's courage doesn't come from confidence in himself; it comes from confidence that God's grace is enough.

That same grace shapes the kind of community Paul hopes to leave behind. He urges the elders to care for one another, to watch over the flock, to protect the vulnerable, and to remember that generosity is at the heart of the Christian life. His famous quotation of Jesus. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" isn't simply about money. It's a description of the gospel itself. We worship a God whose very nature is self-giving love. Perhaps that's why the chapter ends not with a theological argument but with tears. They kneel. They pray. They embrace. They weep. The writer of Acts doesn't hide those emotions because grief is often the price of love. The elders are heartbroken precisely because this relationship mattered. The gospel had become more than an idea. It had become a shared life. In a world that prizes independence and self-sufficiency, this text offers a different vision. The church is a community of people who belong to one another, who entrust one another to God's care, and who know that every faithful goodbye is held within God's larger promise. Leaders come and go. Seasons change. Ministries begin and end. But God's grace continues to build up God's people. In the end, that's Paul's deepest confidence and perhaps ours as well. Not that we are strong enough to hold on to the church, but that Christ is faithful enough to hold on to us.

## Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

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### *Traditional version:*

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,  
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us  
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,  
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

### *Contemporary version:*

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,  
your will be done on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those  
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial  
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory are yours,  
Now and forever. Amen