

# KNITTED TOGETHER

Acts 20:36-38

Today we continue our series *Ignite*. Last week we had Hiram and Mikell preaching about the power of prayer. Today, we look at the deep connection within the body of Christ.

## ILLUSTRATION — THE DEPLOYED PARENT

Picture a parent being deployed overseas — no phone calls, no FaceTime, no letters for months. The night before they leave, they don't sit the family down and hand them a binder full of instructions. They don't leave a strategic plan on the kitchen counter. Instead, they kneel down on the living room floor, pull their family close, and they *pray*. They weep. They hold on tight. They say, *"I am placing you in God's hands."*

That image — the grief, the love, the surrender to God — is exactly what we find in Acts 20. Paul wasn't leaving them with a manual. He was leaving them in the arms of God. Because he knew the only thing that could keep them knitted together when he was gone wasn't his personality — it was the Holy Spirit moving through their prayer.

*"When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship."*

Acts 20:36-38

## 1. Knitted Together (Slide 1)

### The Context

- **Setting:** Paul is on his way to Jerusalem after years of ministry.
- He bypasses Ephesus to save time but summons the Ephesian elders to meet him in Miletus (Acts 20:16–17).

- **The Farewell (Acts 20:18–35):** Paul reminds them of his humble service, tears, trials, and bold proclamation of the gospel.
- He testifies to God's grace, warns of future "savage wolves" who will distort the truth, and commends them "to God and to the word of His grace" (v. 32).

## The Gospel Produces Givers, Not Takers

Paul quotes Jesus: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (v. 35).

- Society asks: "What can I get out of this?"
- The Gospel shifts our mind to: "What can I give?" (Relationships, finances, emotional support, friendship).
- This requires a renewal of the mind. You are not a taker anymore; you are a giver.

## Grace, Not Law

Grace motivates giving because we have already received everything in Christ.

- We give because we're already completely forgiven, accepted, and resourced in Christ. His generosity in us overflows to others (2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 1:7).
- It is biblical to support those who proclaim the gospel and to help the poor and fellow believers in need (1 Corinthians 9:14; Romans 15:26–27).

## 2. Protecting the Church from Exploitation

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Paul warns of "savage wolves" who will come to pervert the truth (Acts 20:29). These wolves twist the message of Jesus in directions that sabotage grace:

### 1. Adding Law to Grace

**How it sounds:** "Jesus is great, but you also need Moses. Real spirituality is Jesus *plus* rules."

**Why it's deadly:** It shifts trust from Christ's finished work to human performance, producing pride, fear, and hypocrisy. Believers are not under the law.

### 2. Softening or Denying Jesus

**How it sounds:** "Jesus was just a teacher," or "Your sins aren't fully gone."

**Why it's deadly:** It empties the cross of its power. In Christ, forgiveness is once for all.

### 3. Exploiting People for Gain

**Why it's deadly:** It uses God-talk to fleece the flock instead of feed it. Paul contrasted this by working with his own hands.

### 4. Promoting License as Freedom

**How it sounds:** "Grace means sin doesn't matter. Indulge—it's covered."

**Why it's deadly:** Grace isn't permission; it's power. The Spirit writes new desires on our hearts.

### 5. Undermining Your Identity

**Why it's deadly:** It keeps saints acting like slaves. In Christ, you are new, clean, close, and one with Him forever.

## Main Point: A Legacy of Love (Slide 2)

Paul cared deeply for the church of Ephesus. He spent three years there—his longest stay in any city—teaching house to house. He wanted to see them healthy, not abused by wolves.

#### ILLUSTRATION

**Children and Parents:** As a parent, we want the best for our children. In the same way, Paul wanted the best for these children of God.

### Demonstrating Love

When Paul prayed, they wept aloud. This wasn't a ritual; it was open, audible sobbing.

- **Affection:** They kissed him fervently. It wasn't a quick goodbye, but a demonstration of deep love.
- **Building Up:** Because of this love, we cannot tear each other down with criticism or gossip. We must speak life.

### Why Did He Kneel and Sob?

He was saying goodbye. Kneeling was a natural posture of dependence as they entrusted one another to God's grace. The gospel had knit them together. Paul was leaving, but he didn't leave them with a strategic plan—he left them on their knees.

"The only thing that could keep them knitted together when he was gone wasn't his personality, but the Holy Spirit moving through their prayer."

#### CLOSING ILLUSTRATION — THE KNITTED FABRIC

Imagine holding up a piece of hand-knitted fabric. Every stitch is individual — different threads, different places — yet they are inseparably woven into one another. Now find a loose thread and begin to pull it. What happens? The whole thing starts to unravel. That's because what holds it together isn't the strength of any single thread — it's the pattern running through all of them.

**That is the church.** We are different people, different backgrounds, different stories — but the Holy Spirit is the thread running through every one of us. Pull one thread and the whole body feels it. Strengthen one thread and the whole body is stronger. Even in separation, we remain one with Christ and sealed by the Spirit (*Ephesians 1:13–14*). Their sorrow was real, but their security was unshaken — Jesus' finished work binds us together beyond geography, beyond distance, beyond goodbye.

## Conclusion (Slide 3)

- Paul was ready to be with the Lord — **are you?**
- Seek unity and love within this community.
- Commit to building each other up rather than tearing down.