

Waverly, October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1864

In anticipation of entering the army as Chaplin.

And now brethren I commend you to God & to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up & to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Acts 20:32

Paul was on his way from Philippi to Jerusalem. He touches at Miletus the seaport of Ephesus & sends for the Elders of the church which he had founded there & after various parting counsels & exhortations he leaves them in the hands of their covenant God in the language of our text.

(1<sup>st</sup>) What is intended of his commending them to God & the Word of his grace? (a) It means placing them in the hands and under the protection of the Great Shepherd & bishop of their souls. He had before received for them "a ministry of the Lord Jesus". He had been an Ambassador of God to them. He had borne these solemn responsibilities for years. Now he lays it all down & gives back to God the burden of that care & responsibility.

He knew full well that they needed still guidance, but leaves them with God for this. That they needed protections, someone to watch over them as a church & individuals, & as an under Shepherd he had endeavored to do this in the past. But now he leaves them to the protection of God & the watch & care of a father's love. He knew that they needed grace both in prosperity & in adversity & he leaves them with God for all this.

He gives back to God His ministry as far as they are concerned. He gives back that church and all its membership for which he has travailed & toiled, wept & prayed. The burden of responsibility formerly born for them is no longer his. He clears himself of all active responsibility.

1<sup>st</sup> by giving it in charge to the Elders of the church and then by giving the church & the interests of citizens connected with it back into the hands of God & it is a blessed privilege when called to other labors & to another field of ministerial responsibility to give up into the hands of God all the burdens of the old & to feel, " Now here my active & burdensome responsibility ceases. If divisions occur, if things go wrong, Christ will not hold me responsible if I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God & have not kept back truth which would have been profitable to you.

This is what Paul meant: He gave back that Ephesian church to him who had blessed his labors among them & today I commend you to God in this sense, & from my shoulders today is lifted by him from whom I received it, the burden of your spiritual welfare at least for the present. But too it means to carry others to God in prayer according to their necessities and condition & God forbid that when I shall cease to bear the burden of ministerial responsibility among you that I shall ever cease while I \_\_\_\_\_ the commending you to God in this sense.

My interests in this church will never die, my anxiety for your purity, peace, your mutual fellowship in the gospel, your enlargement & up building shall often find expression at the mercy seat & even though it should be in the case of any \_\_\_\_\_ that the more I love you the less I be loved. Should any of you permit my enemies to slander my character & impute to me wrong motives until you stand in doubt of me.

I with the Apostles commend you also to the word of his grace, to the glorious gospel of the grace of God.

1<sup>st</sup> Was a parting commendation of the Gospel & mostly of their firmest belief of their being routed & grounded in it.

He at parting commends the Gospel as he had in his ministry presented it to them, faith with the evidences of its heavenly origin.

2 Was a commendation of the Gospel to their constant regard. Their daily study, their serious valuation & attendance upon its means of grace. He would have them forget all else sooner than neglect the Gospel of the grace of God.

3 Twas a commendation of it to their love, their deepest & highest & strongest & holiest affections. Its savior to their personal friendship its promises as their present heavenly manna, the living water for their thirsty souls. Its heavenly glory, soon to be revealed as the one object to be coveted & sought with all their hearts.

4 Twas a commendation of the Gospel as the rule of their conduct only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ" & not hearers only but doers of the word" "Themselves being epistles known and read of all men".

And finally it was a recommendation of the Gospel as worthy of preserving , attachment & adherence to it of endurance to the end in it of faithfulness unto death of continuance in its well doings even unto suffering & martyrdom if need be, that he may obtain the better resurrection. The glory & honor & immortality & eternal life to be yet revealed.

This commendation \_\_\_\_\_ their & your entire dependence upon God through the Gospel. God without the Gospel of his Grace is not what you need & the Gospel without God is not what you need a dead letter.

You need God to keep you & his mighty power through faith in this Gospel even unto final salvation. Having obtained help of God you continue "for he only is able to complete the good work begun in any of you, carrying it on even unto the day of Jesus Christ".

And yet though the gospel aside from the accompanying power of God, is but a dead letter, Yet it is as an instrument in his hands, able to build you up. It has adaptations to this end. Your spiritual upbuilding.

To draw you off from all confidence in yourselves to \_\_\_\_\_ all your glory. To work conviction of your sin & ruin. It is adopted to give you confidence in God. To lead you to him as a refuge. To open your life with the Publicans prayer: "God be merciful to me a sinner" & bring to the saint the assurance of pardon & acceptance in the beloved.

It is adopted to awaken penitence & humility & faith & hope & love & joy and to build you up in every characteristic which can adorn the Christian.

Paul in his letter to this same Ephesian Church brings out this same blessed truth: the power of the Gospel with its living ministrations & its heavenly influences working in the hearts of believers

(Eph 4: 11-16). He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for it was the power of God unto their salvation & they even built upon this foundation of Apostles & Prophets Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. In whom the whole building fitly framed together growth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

A glorious future may be yours as a church through a full reception & right use of that Gospel which is able to build you up.

But this is not all: one after another must pass through the dark valley the church may live but only if a constant change of membership & his mind sweeps onward to the future, the eternal world & his valuation of the Gospel & his commendation of it is this: "that it is able to give them an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

It is the power of God to the full redemption of every believing soul.

The Gospel adopted to sanctify, to make holy, & promises the inheritance of the saints in Glory to all who comply with & faithfully empower it.

I commend you to the word of his Grace which is able to bring us out of even great tribulations & temptations & conflicts & from the fierceness of our spiritual warfare with foes without & within. To stand at the last on the banks of the river of life above & walk the streets of the new Jerusalem and how with the innumerable company of the redeemed in joyful ascriptions of Glory, honor & blessing & dominion & power to him who sitteth upon the throne & to the Lamb who was slain & has redeemed us to God by his blood.

I task you to record before God that though I came at the first among you with great reluctance this day and in helplessness & weakness & have prosecuted my ministry amid much contention at times it is true: but still in truth & plainness I have preached among you not myself, not any system of philosophy or natural religion, but this gospel of the grace of God, your helplessness & eventual ruin in sin aside from the help from God. Your help and deliverance & full salvation & abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord & Savior, your eternal inheritance among the sanctified through acceptance & belief of the truth.

Wherefore I do feel before God today that if it should please him to terminate my ministry among you at this time & we meet no more as Pastor & people in this house of prayer or on the shores of time, & not again until we stand before the judgment seat of Christ. That even you then will be found, all of you, to acknowledge that from me you have heard the conditions of salvation, truly stated & the invitations of infinite love, urged often upon your acceptance & now friends one & all, with thankfulness for all your kindness to me & mine, your oft repeated forbearance with my weakness & even my faltz,  
"I now commend you to God & to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up & to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."