

## The Cost

### Acts 20:17-38

Each day, it's important to take your bearings. Where are you today? In the Easter season, in the scriptures, in your daily life, in your very self? Spend a few minutes getting your bearings for the day.

Let's briefly examine where we are in the Book of Acts and then begin our day with a prayer for deliverance—for ourselves, our fraternity brothers, and all Exodus Men.

You are heading back to Jerusalem. We are heading back to where the story began. We are now ready to look back and see if we are making progress and to take stock of our mission.

Pray that the Lord grants deliverance to you, your family, and your fraternity.

Pray for freedom for all men in Exodus, just as they are praying for you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who have taught the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant that in the same Spirit we may be truly wise and ever rejoice in his consolation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### A Reading from the Book of Acts

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the Church. And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you all the time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which befell me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance to God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, bound in the Spirit, not knowing what shall befall me there; except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that all you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will see my face no more. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the Church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore

be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities, and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by so toiling one must help the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

And when he had spoken thus, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they all wept and embraced Paul and kissed him, sorrowing most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they should see his face no more. And they brought him to the ship.

### Reflection

Paul labored hard to build up the Church, not only with his preaching but also by working as a tentmaker to supply for his own needs. He nurtured the community in Ephesus with his own tears, and now he says farewell, knowing that he can entrust the Christians there to the elders (the Greek word, *presbyteros*, is the word we use for priest) that he has formed. Christian community requires structure and authority for a few reasons. We need authoritative guidance and correction to receive the sacraments and to support when the wolves attack.

We tend to think of wolves more as attacks from outside of the community, but we often see the most serious threats to faith coming from within. Paul warned the community that they would be persecuted. He seems to worry more, however, about a distortion of the message of the Gospel that he entrusted to them. All of those who distort the teaching of Christ are the wolves.

Paul says the Church in Ephesus knows the cost of discipleship: they may have to give all. He asks the elders to feed and care for the sheep and to protect them from dangers without and within.

As men, we, too, have certain people who have been entrusted to our care, no matter our stage in life. How can we care for them more faithfully? Are we prepared to pay the cost of discipleship and suffer for it until the end?

Pray today about any challenges the Lord may be calling you to face more directly.

### Week 6 Action Items

Evaluate your Plan of Life.

Plan a final Easter celebration.

Check in with your anchor.