



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?**  
**Wk. 73 “Committing to the Grace of His Word”**  
**By Pastor Jody May 04/07/2024**

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**Acts 20:32-38 ESV**

<sup>32</sup> 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.

<sup>33</sup> I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

<sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**Pastor – “People of God, this is the Word of God.”**

**People – “Thanks be to God.”**

**[PRAY]**

We are going to wrap up this farewell address today to the Elders of Ephesus, and as I say this there was a lot of struggles in doing so for there is enough material here for three sermons. BUT I believe these remaining verses are tied together by a couple of phrases here in v.32, which for our sakes, I think works better to deliver them as a whole sermon.

First, we have this little phrase at the end of v.32 **“Among all those who are sanctified”**, that is Paul’s code phrase in his epistles for the **“church”**. That means; however, you preach these texts make sure to point out that these things happen within the life of the corporate church. This sermon is not to be taken as a list of individual ideas to be practiced on your own outside these walls away from the people of HCC, they are to be practiced and lived out among the body where you abide. So, we wrote this sermon to accommodate that intent.



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Second, Paul’s opening statement in v.32 is a transitional statement that effects the rest of the verses in this discourse. **“And now I commend you to God and the word of His grace”**, so I wanted to preach the rest of the verses in his speech to the elders in light of that phrase. Therefore, two things we keep in mind as we start today, 1st - your job is to hear this not as just an individual but as a contributing part of a larger organism, the body of Christ 2nd - we have been commended to these practices under the care of God and the Word of His Grace or The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let’s then build out this phrase shall we, **what does it mean to ‘commend’ something**, for that is not a word we use much anymore in the English language.

**[ILLUSTRATION]**

The word **commend** is also translated as the word **commit in the English**, it comes from the word παράτιθημι paratithēmi, par-at-ith'-ay-mee; from G3844 and G5087; to place alongside, i.e. present (food, truth); by implication, **to deposit (as a trust or for protection):—allege, commend, commit (the keeping of), put forth, set before. To present as a deposit into the trust of another.**

The other day Heather had asked one of our children to bring to her a piece of jewelry, at first, I was like, “Wait, what!?” Not because I didn’t trust the judgment of my wife or my child but in the moment, I felt like that was a lot of weight to place on a kid, because it required them to be responsible to carry a very precious thing, for an undetermined amount of time, transporting it outside the normal confines of the home. It took a little comforting from Heather to assuage me it was going to be alright, and it was. That situation revealed this truth: **the more valuable the thing is to commend/commit, the greater the amount of trust needed to let it go.**

Would you let your kid drive your car? I bet that decision is made based upon the length of their driving time displaying their care as a driver + the value you have placed on your car. The pricier a car = the less you and I are willing to commend them the responsibility of caring for it. That’s for both their protection and yours.



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Would you let your kids sleepover at anyone’s house? That means you have to commend them to another set of parents for the care of your child. That takes a lot of trust in the other set of parents, the child, and their home to be able to do that.

Would you rent your house out on VRBO, so other people could use your home for a vacation? For some of you that ranks as high as a sleepover, shame on you! But to commend to people your home, to trust that they would return it to you in better or at least the same shape they got it, that takes some gumption.

It is important to understand this thing called commending/committing a thing into someone’s care is not a task to be taken lightly for we are held accountable for that which we are commending/committing. Because that which took a lifetime to build value in can be lost in a moment because of careless commending and of course that can have very long and lasting effects on your life.

But as important as all these things are (children, home, finances, earthly treasures) there is still something more important than all of that, per Jesus.

**Matthew 16:26 ESV**

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his **soul**?  
Or what shall a man give in return for his **soul**?

The soul **IS** the most important thing you have, and not only that, it doesn’t belong to you! It’s only on loan.

**Ecclesiastes 12:7 ESV**

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the **spirit returns to God** who gave it.

And if it be the Father’s, look at the expectation on it when it is returned unto Him.

**Ezekiel 18:4 ESV**

Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: **the soul who sins shall die.**



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WOW! The soul is the most important thing in our care, so what can we do, if we know we are born into sin ([Psalm 51:5](#)) and destined to die ([Rom. 6:23](#)), what hope do we have when even in death we cannot escape the judgement of God? Don't worry, you have a Savior that has shown us the way.

According to the author Luke, he used this word **“commit”** three separate occasions, and the first time Luke used it is where we want to look at right now.

**Luke 23:46 ESV**

Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I **commit** my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

Jesus takes that which is most precious unto Himself, He takes that part of Him that will outlive His flesh, that is eternal, He puts trust into His Father that He will judge Him perfectly according to the law, that He will take into account not just the things Jesus refrained from doing, to keep the law, but that He would weigh perfectly the works He accomplished in the name of the Father, for His glory. Jesus put into His Father's hands His Soul for care, for justice, and for vindication. And we saw the Father last week, perfectly weigh out Jesus' life rewarding Him resurrection, a throne, and the authority to rule over all creation! And that my friend is exactly what we should do, we need to commit the care of our eternal souls unto God for He is the only one qualified to care for our souls!

Paul in his farewell address, when He has spent years training the elders, when he had spent countless hours, days, and weeks teaching the masses, there is nothing else he can do for them. According to [20:25](#) this is the last time he will see them, so as a father would do for a child, he leaves them with a last will and testament, these are the parting words for a loved one that he will not see again. He takes that which is precious unto himself, and he turns them over, he commends/commits them, and puts them into even better hands, the hands of their Lord, knowing it will be the only way they make it.

Today I want to show us what it looks like to be committed unto the care of Christ, to trust in Him, and how we participate in that process. And as a child



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must learn to walk on their own, they eventually have to let go of mom or dad’s hand and they have to grasp onto something else to steady themselves. Christian that is our life! We are never old enough to walk on our own, and thank God, He doesn’t ask us to. Instead, God takes us by our hands and is now committed to getting us home for we are precious unto Him. So, family pay attention now to the ways we are to cling to our God.

I’ve got three different ways in which we are going to cling to God as we are committed unto His care, as He watches over us: Cling to our Inheritance in the body of Christ, cling to Charity for the body of Christ, and cling to Love through the body of Christ.

### **1. Cling to our Inheritance in the Body of Christ.**

<sup>32</sup> 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.

As I said earlier Paul now knows he will not see these beloved ones again, these people who have been his family for over three years and have been the fruit of one of his greatest spiritual trials. He knows he will no longer be able to care for them as he had in the future. As fate would have it, a few years later Paul makes it to Rome and it is while he is there in prison, he gets to write his final will and testament to the church at Ephesus. Even though he will not see them again he writes to them a formal letter emphasizing what he spoke to them here in Miletus.

### **Ephesians 1:3-13 ESV**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us **in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons **through Jesus Christ** according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us **in the Beloved**. <sup>7</sup> **In him** we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our



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trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth **in Christ** <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things **in him**, things in heaven and things on earth.

<sup>11</sup> **In him** we have obtained an **inheritance**, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope **in Christ** might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> **In him** you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed **in him**, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

According to Paul’s letter to these men, who did Paul commend them to, who is the **Word of His Grace**? Jesus the Christ (v.3)! Why? Because everything we receive from God comes through Him! **‘In Him’** we got our **Inheritance** (v.11) that is we were adopted through the work of Christ (v.5) received redemption & forgiveness (v.7), through election and predestination (v.4,5,&11), and sealed by the work of the HS (v.13). Paul commits, he entrusts their care, to the **foreordained purpose** and **plans of God**, because what God plans to do with and through His family, **cannot be stopped!** The safest place Paul can put the care of those he loves is into the hands of Christ, who will **ensure their Salvation**, because it was a planned inheritance from the beginning of time.

**LP**

**We cling to our inheritance because the Gospel is our Salvation planned, preordained, and protected by God alone.**

**What does clinging to our inheritance look like?**

If you have been redeemed from the world stop giving the world your allegiance (worry over life and what may happen to you, anger over government and how they might treat you, stress over money and how it’s taken from you, and desires to be liked by those that care less about you), put your trust in a Sovereign God that has planned out your life, from before time, out of love for you!



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If you have been forgiven then stop living as if your guilty, (stop trying to pay for your wrongs) for God had planned for the Son to remove your sin and shame, and it started with God’s decree over your life before the world.

If you been sealed by the HS then rest that even in trials and tribulations, they are not meant to remove you from God, nor are they set upon you by God as punishment, but that all circumstances are used to preserve your Salvation, because those same situations were foreseen and ordained by God Himself!

To cling to your inheritance is to cling to a Sovereign God that left no chance to one of His children being lost.

Again, I also just want to point out that the letter was written to a church (letter to the Ephesians), not an individual, that means **you experience your inheritance among those who also are experiencing their inheritance**, so that all may be challenged in how we steward that inheritance. We are to cling to our Inheritance as adopted heirs in the body, encouraging each other to cling to the Gospel, as Paul said, *“among those who are sanctified”*. That then brings us to a natural occurrence for a person who is overwhelmed with the **Word of His Grace**.

## **2. Cling to Charity for the Body of Christ.**

<sup>33</sup> I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. <sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. <sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must **help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, **‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”

Paul is displaying now in this next section what happens when you live out of the riches of your inheritance. When clinging to your inheritance, you won’t be inclined to want to take from others nor will you try to get ahead off of other’s work. Paul explains to them as one who valued his inheritance how he used it to, **“help the weak”** (v.35). Who are the weak? I think it has a double connotation, yes some were the poor that legitimately needed help, and some were the *weak in faith* that needed to see that Paul wasn’t out for personal gain.





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**LP**

**The church that doesn't practice charity among the body is a church that has lost its' ability to witness for Christ.**

To say you have been adopted, you have received that inheritance, is to say in the same breath, **you now think of others more than yourself**. We have an example of this, through the one in which we received our adoption:

**2 Corinthians 8:9 ESV**

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.”

We become rich not by earthly wealth, that ‘rich’ is the inheritance of the good things from the Gospel we spoke of earlier. The Gospel declares to us, it cost you nothing to receive your inheritance, but it cost Christ His life. In return we now live out our riches among this world, set free from its’ clutches, and display to one another in charity/kindness the spiritual wealth we have received.

Christ has even gone as far to elaborate this point for us.

**Luke 12:16-21 ESV**

<sup>16</sup>And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, <sup>17</sup>and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’<sup>18</sup> And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.””<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’<sup>21</sup> So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

**LP**

**There is nothing wrong with having extra, but there is everything wrong with storing it up just for yourself, while those among God's people remain weak.**

Family, one of the ways we commit ourselves unto God's care, and cling to charity, is by making sure we adhere to the instructions of what to do with our





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inheritance, and God has specifically left instructions in God’s Word to first take care of those in the church who are weak. Do we love others with our extra, do we do the hard work of budgeting and living within our means so as not to put a burden on the church unduly ([1 Tim. 5](#); [1 Thes. 4:11-12](#)), do we live understanding that our inheritance was meant to be shared not hoarded? We have been committed unto God for our wellbeing therefore let us cling to charity for by doing so, we are clinging to the Gospel that has saved us richly.

### **3. Cling to Love through the Body of Christ.**

<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.  
<sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, <sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Well, Paul as a farewell commends them through a prayer. These are the words he uses to turn over his care of these people in his mind, to God. Look at how they all reacted, ***much weeping on the part of all, they embrace and kissed him***. Some of you are cringing right now, that is way too personal for you! But that’s the point, the gift of their inheritance, their new identity has changed them. They don’t want Paul to go, it says in v. 38 they are grieved the most over what he said in v.25 when he said *you won’t see me again*. Then in light of that prophecy, they walked him to the ship. It’s a beautiful picture of the church that has learned to bear one another’s burdens.

### **Galatians 6: 2-3,6,9-10 ESV**

<sup>2</sup> **Bear one another's burdens**, and so fulfill the law of Christ (code for loving neighbor). <sup>3</sup> For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

<sup>6</sup> Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.

<sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. <sup>10</sup> So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and **especially to those who are of the household of faith**.

**LP**



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**The practice of clinging to Love through the body is practicing bearing one another’s burdens.**

It is one of the most inconvenient things that can happen to you in your life that you have to put down the things in your life to help bear the burden of someone in the body. Yet I will tell you those burdens you have will never ‘feel’ light enough to put down or ‘feel’ light enough to juggle while you are trying to help someone else, but through the Gospel, **when you commit to bearing one another’s burdens, your own burdens become light!**

Yet, there is another reason for this.

**John 13:35 ESV**

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Loved ones I know it seems like a lot, love when it’s hard, be charitable when you would rather save, and embrace the Gospel when the world calls for your allegiance. But as Paul has commended his people to Christ, so have we been commended, by God Himself.

**John 17:24 ESV**

“Father, I desire that they also, whom **you have given me**, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

And as Paul wrote to the Ephesians Christ has written to us, not just one letter, but the entirety of scripture to help us cling to that which sets us apart and preserves our soul, for He wants us to know that we have been given to Him! Knowing that fact, that the Bible is a collection of writings put together by Jesus for the care of your soul the MOST important part of you, because He loves you, do you view His Word any differently today?

When my father died, I was the inheritor of the May name and birthright. It was a hard time. Both of my parents died in the same week, I was 33 with a new child, a hard job, a young wife, while still trying to figure life out, and I had no one now in my life connecting me to my roots. My father though did leave



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me a last will and testament, along with a recording of his cancer ridden voice. Being the inheritor of his things I already had his blessing but being that I loved him, I sought to honor his name with his wishes, so people would know that I loved him. I had to put aside my time to grieve for a while, I had to handle the affairs of my parents, I had to deal with creditors, and I had to confront wayward family that only wanted my parents' things. It was my joy to carry out my father's wishes and it brought me peace knowing I was carrying on with His will, and in doing so it made my personal burdens seem light.

As it should be for us to carry out the wishes of our Lord what we see in scripture, so that we too may hear, “Well done my good and faithful servant.”

You see clinging to the Gospel, is a joy, not a curse. For the Bible is God's Will for our life. He gave us His Word because He wants us to bear His name well, He wants us to know His pleasure, He wants us to be successful in this life, He wants us to know how to please Him, and He most definitely wants us to experience the bulk of our inheritance that we don't receive until our return home.

**[CHALLENGE]**

Let us cling to the Gospel. Clinging to the Gospel in a practical way is practice reaping what has been sowed within you.

Let us practice living out our inheritance, our forgiveness, our redemption, our adoption by Grace, and display how God has planned it all. When you feel unsatisfied with life that is exactly when you know you have let go of your inheritance and have grabbed onto a cheap imitation of this world.

Let us Cling to Charity. Do we know the needs of each other in this room. When we have extra do we ask the people in this room first? Do we seek to be thrifty in our spending so that we may help the weak in this body? It is an honorable choice to put the needs of others above your own, let us pursue that together, and let us discover that God is really with us by providing more than what we need



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Let us Cling to Love. How are you walking out each other’s burdens? First, do you keep a running prayer list of the needs in your CG, are you interceding? Secondly, are you letting people know what has you worried, AND do you let others know where you are concerned for them? This is what is worthy of praise, to show others that you will love your neighbor as yourself, by bearing their burdens.

Let us pursue this together Highlands, let us cling to the Gospel and show the world the greatness of the one we have been committed to, Jesus our Lord, and let us show them how great He is by how hard we hold onto Him.

**[PRAYER]**

**[CALL TO OBEY]**

**Elder –**

**Philippians 4:8-9 ESV**

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Let us do as we have been instructed by Paul as a messenger of Christ to practice our inheritance to bring Him glory, and experience Him with us!

**[COMMUNION]**

Pastor Jody explains The Bread and the Wine  
Followed by Family prayer over the Bread and the Wine – led by heads of households.

**[CONFESSION OF FAITH]**

\* The Congregation will stand



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**Elder** – “Christians, what do you believe?”

**Congregation** – From LBCF 8.5 on Christ the Mediator

“The Lord Jesus has fully satisfied the justice of God, obtained reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those given to him by the Father. He has accomplished these things by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he once for all offered up to God through the eternal Spirit.”

**[OFFERING+LAST SONG]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that prepared our inheritance before time ensuring that all His children will receive what is due to them.

Go in the name of the Son, that shares His inheritance with us, making us rich in the Grace and Mercy of His Gospel.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that enables us to cling to our inheritance, exhibiting charity and love so that more may believe.