

Don't Shrink Back

Acts 20:22–27

INTRO – FAVOR & RESPONSIBILITY

- God is moving at Netcast: deliverance, baptism, transformation.
- Favor always brings **responsibility**.
- When Jesus becomes Lord, something else is dethroned—and dethroned idols fight back.

CONTEXT – ACTS 19–20

- Paul spends 3 years in Ephesus:
 - Lives changed
 - Idols burned
 - Ungodly lifestyles renounced
- *“The word of the Lord increased and prevailed mightily.”*
- With success comes opposition.
- The Holy Spirit releases Paul to move on.

ACTS 20 SETTING

- Paul is 30 miles from Ephesus (Miletus).
- Calls the church leaders to him.

- The Spirit tells Paul this is the **last time** he'll see them.
- This is the only first-person speech in Acts delivered to Christian leaders.

Leadership isn't a title—it's influence.
If people watch your life, you're leading.

TEXT – ACTS 20:22–27

Paul transitions from his **past faithfulness** to his **future obedience**.

1. THE SPIRIT LEADS INTO THE UNKNOWN

Acts 20:22–23

- Paul is “*bound by the Spirit.*”
- He knows obedience awaits—but not outcomes.
- Only certainty: imprisonment and affliction.

Key Truth

- Obedience without full information is **normal Christianity**.
- Hardship is often confirmation of God's leading, not His absence.

American Christianity expects comfort.
Biblical Christianity expects faithfulness.

2. THE SPIRIT LEADS WHERE COMFORT WOULDN'T

- Paul sees suffering as **confirmation**, not abandonment.

- God's leading does not promise ease.
- Better than comfort:
 - Endurance > health
 - Eternal hope > wealth
 - Character > power
 - Faithfulness > status

James 1:2–4 | Romans 5:1–5 | Matthew 4:1–11

3. SELF-SUBMISSION IS NOT SELF-HATRED

Acts 20:24

- Paul doesn't say his life is worthless.
- He says it isn't **ultimate**.
- "Precious" = honor → he doesn't need to be honored *by himself*.

Key Distinction

- Christianity doesn't teach self-hatred.
- It teaches freedom from **self-worship**.

Grace didn't make you independent—it made you secure.

Mark 8:35

4. PAUL FINISHED HIS RACE BY PREACHING A FULL GOSPEL

Acts 20:26–27

- Paul says he's innocent of their blood.
- Why? He didn't **shrink back** from the whole counsel of God.

Whole Counsel of God:

- Grace **and** truth
- Mercy **and** repentance
- Forgiveness **and** transformation

JESUS: GRACE + TRUTH EMBODIED

John 8:1–11

- "Neither do I condemn you." → Grace
- "Go and sin no more." → Truth

Grace doesn't ignore sin.

Grace breaks sin's power.

THE GOSPEL EXPLAINED

1 Corinthians 6:9–11

- "Do not be deceived."
- Sin is named honestly.
- Hope breaks in: "*And such were some of you.*"
- The gospel doesn't manage sin—it **ends its reign**.

Galatians 5:16–24

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Paul didn't preach for applause.
- He preached for faithfulness.
- Pressure to shrink back was real—cultural, relational, personal.

Partial truth creates malnourished disciples.

Law without grace = legalism.

Grace without truth = compromise.

FINAL CHALLENGE

One day the question won't be:

- "Were you liked?"

The question will be:

- "**Were you faithful?**"

That is Acts 20.

That is the whole counsel of God.

That is the gospel.