

“Commended to God”  
Acts 20:32  
(Preached at Trinity, November 28, 2007)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw earlier, after leaving Philippi, Paul arrived at Troas where he spent a week teaching and encouraging these brethren. He remained over the Lord’s Day and joined them in the breaking of bread and fellowship. He also preached long to them instructing them in the Word.
  2. After leaving Troas Paul’s companions left by ship and Paul’s plan was to travel by land and meet up with them at Assos.  
After meeting up with them Paul was in a hurry to continue on to Jerusalem so that he would arrive in time for the Day of Pentecost. They made several brief stops in various cities then stopped at Ephesus.
  3. Paul’s purpose on this journey was to visit churches on his way back to Jerusalem in order to strengthen, encourage, and teach them. While in Ephesus he called the elders together in order to instruct and encourage them.  
**Acts 20:17** – “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.”
  4. Paul knew this would probably be the last time he would see these brothers and he wanted to strengthen them as the leaders of the Church. His method was to remind them of his own leadership, leadership to be followed, and then he instructed them as to their duty as elders of Christ’s church.
  5. After giving them some personal instruction he gives a benediction – He commends them to God.  
**Acts 20:32** – “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”
  6. Tonight I want to direct your attention to this verse as Paul gives his farewell address to these fellow laborers in the Gospel.
  7. Now we are not to suppose that the apostle intends this to the elders only, but the church also. The elders were being addressed as officers and representatives of the church. These words speak to us.
- I. First, Paul says he commends them to God  
“And now, brethren, I commend you to God”
    - A. Paul had taken his duty to care for the church seriously
      1. It weighed upon him  
**2 Corinthians 11:28** – “ Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”  
**2 Corinthians 12:15** – “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you”

2. He had discharged his duty well with the Ephesians  
**Acts 20:20** – “*And* how I kept back nothing that was profitable *unto you*, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,”
  3. In **Verse 32** Paul is telling them, “Now that I am about depart from you I leave you in the hands of God.”
- B. This is a most excellent place to be  
**Psalm 28:7** – “The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.”  
**Psalm 18:2-3** – “The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower. <sup>3</sup> I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.”
1. Paul says in **Romans 8:39** that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
  2. What a powerful Shepherd holds us and keeps us.
- C. What does it mean to be commended to God?
1. We are commended to the *power* of God
    - a. To endure every trial  
**Romans 8:35** – “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”
    - b. To stand firm through every temptation  
**1 Corinthians 10:13** – “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*.”
    - c. To fight valiantly through every attack of Satan  
**Ephesians 6:10-11** – “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”
    - d. God has the power to keep us and preserve us.  
**Jude 1:24-25** – “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, <sup>25</sup> To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”  
 John Gill – “The greatest believer, who has the largest measure of grace, if God should withdraw, leave him to himself, and not grant him fresh supplies of his grace, would not be able, with all the grace he has received, to withstand the snares of the world, the temptations of Satan, and the corruptions of his own heart.”
  2. Being commended to God also means being commended to his *wisdom*, to counsel and direct us in all our ways

**Proverbs 3:5-7** – “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. <sup>6</sup> In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. <sup>7</sup> Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil.”

3. Being commended to God also means being commended to His person. There is no other being who is worthy to bow before – He is glorious.

II. Second, Paul is commending them to the Word of God’s grace

A. Some believe this is referring to Christ who is called the Word

**John 1:1** – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

**John 1:14** – “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”

**1 John 1:1** – “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;”

1. Surely Jesus is our life – the source of all life – He is the Word of grace.
2. John Gill, the respected English Baptist pastor of the 18<sup>th</sup> century held this view.
3. It is doubtful that this passage is speaking of Christ. According to J.C. Ryle – “It is not clear that the Lord Jesus is ever called “the Word” by any New Testament writer, except John.”

B. The best way to determine the meaning of a particular passage is to examine the complete passage to look for hints of explanation.

1. We get a hint in **Verse 24**

**Acts 20:24** – “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.”

2. In **Verse 24** Paul is linking this grace with the Gospel. It would seem most consistent to equate the “the word of his grace” with the Gospel of grace.
3. In the specific sense of meaning the Gospel refers specifically to the work of Christ – His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and ascension.
4. In a more general sense as we see here it can refer to the entirety of the Word of God. We can find numerous passages that equate the power of the Word of God with Gospel of salvation.

**Acts 2:41** – “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls.”

**Romans 10:16-17** – “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? <sup>17</sup> So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:13** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

- C. This Word of Grace is able to build you up  
 “and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up”
1. Paul is commending them to God and His Word of grace. This is because God’s Word contains the promises of what God has pledged unto us. It is through His Word that He builds His people unto holiness.
  2. God has saved us that we might be holy – through justification we are declared holy through the righteousness of Christ. Christ imputes His perfect holiness unto us.
  3. But God has also saved us that we might live a holy life.  
**Ephesians 1:4** – “. . . he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” – outward holiness and inward holiness.
  4. The Word of God is the chief means of our sanctification –
    - a. Paul says that the Word is “able” – the word here is **δύναμαι** which is where we get our word, dynamite. It refers to something strong and powerful.
    - b. God uses His Word to teach us more of Himself and His demands for His people. Everything we know about the Christian life comes from God’s Word.
    - c. He uses His Word to convict us of sin and conform us unto His holy nature. We can only measure our lives by the standard of His Word.  
**Psalm 119:11** – “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
    - d. Over and over in the Bible the Word of God is seen as that which builds and edifies God’s people in holiness.  
**John 17:17** – “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”  
**Psalm 119:9** – “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.”  
**John 17:17** – “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”  
**1 Peter 2:2** – “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”
    - e. Louis Berkhoff – “The principle means used by the Holy Spirit (in sanctification) is the Word of God. Scripture presents all the objective conditions for holy exercises and acts. It serves to excite spiritual activity by presenting motives and inducements, and gives direction to it by prohibitions, exhortations, and examples.
    - f. Paul says here that he is commending them to the Word of God’s grace. That is the means through which they will be strengthened and built up.  
**2 Timothy 3:16-17** – “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: <sup>17</sup> That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
- D. Paul is also declaring that the Word of God’s grace is able to give you an inheritance among the saints  
 “and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

1. Again, this is because it is through the Word of God that we receive the promises of God. These promises are given to all of God's elect – "all them which are sanctified."
2. The Word of God declares that we are joint heirs with Christ.  
**Romans 8:17-18** – "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together. <sup>18</sup> For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are not worthy to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us."
3. What is the essence of our faith? Faith is a resting upon the objective truth of God's Word.  
**Romans 10:17** – "So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."
4. Faith involves receiving the Word of God – salvation is often referred to as receiving the Word.  
**Acts 2:41** – "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls."
5. Salvation is not just a head knowledge of facts about Christ, but you cannot be saved without a knowledge of Christ.
6. You cannot rest upon the glorious truths unless you know the truths.

#### Conclusion:

1. Paul is commending these Christians to God and the Word of His grace that they might press on until the end. God keeps us and preserves us by His mighty power but one of the means He uses is His Word.  
**Hebrews 4:12** – "For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."
2. There are many today that believe they can grow in grace without the Word of God. They believe they can become holy without the Word of God. They believe they can press on without the Word of God.
3. How can we know Christ without His Word? But the Bible is not just an academic exercise. We are not simply reading to acquire knowledge. We are reading to know more of Christ because He becomes all the more glorious to us as we know more and more about Him.
4. May God grant that we press on in faith and assurance until the end when we shall receive the reward of our inheritance.  
**1 Peter 1:3-5** – "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."