



(SLIDE #1) “THE TIE THAT BINDS A PREACHER TO A BELOVED CONGREGATION; APPEALS TO MY BRETHREN.”

Introduction:

- A. This Morning Is A Very Emotional Time For Me And My Family
 - 1. This is the third time in 47 years of preaching that I have preached a final sermon as a pulpit minister for a congregation where I preached -- longevity and circumstances make this one the most difficult.
 - 2. After almost 34 years and 2 months, this is the last sermon I will preach as the pulpit minister at Washington Avenue.
 - 3. Preparing for this sermon has been SO difficult -- I have slept less this week that probably any week of my life.
 - 4. Do you realize that our lives have been intertwined because of God and Christ? Most of us would never know each other if not for Jesus and our faith in Him!
 - 5. Our lives have been DEEPLY enriched and blessed by this amazing privilege.
- B. I Want To Speak To You Of My Love For You, Give Some Charges, And Talk About The Last Three Great Events Of The Bible!

I. (Slide #2) Blessed Be The Tie.

- A. Ministers, With Love For Christ And Congregations, See Members Of A Congregation As Their Family; They Are Consumed With Care For Them!
- B. **(Slide #3)** Paul’s Love For His Brethren And His Tie To Christians:
 - 1. **(Slide #4)** Phil. 1:3-11 “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ; ⁷just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the

affection of Jesus Christ. ⁹An this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, ¹¹being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

- a. Paul was SO THANKFUL for the Philippians; every memory was so precious to him -- “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.” 3
- b. He loved praying for them. “always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy.” 4
- c. They had assisted each other in so many ways in promoting the Gospel and in helping when each had needs -- “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” 5
- d. He had them in his heart -- “because I have you in my heart.” 7
- e. Paul’s heart ached for them when he was away from them -- he was in prison when he dictated this letter; he LONGED for them all -- “God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” 8
- f. He prayed for their loyalty to Christ -- “this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent.” 9,10

2. Ac. 20:18-38 “And when they had come to him, he said to them: ‘You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, ¹⁹serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; ²⁰how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, ²¹testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ²²And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, ²³except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. ²⁴But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. ²⁶Therefore I testify to you this day that I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*. ²⁷For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ³²So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵I have shown you in every

way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” ³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, ³⁸sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”

- a. Paul LIVED the Christian life among the Ephesians; he served the Lord with humility and tears -- “You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility.” 18,19
 - b. He kept nothing back from them -- “I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you.” 20
 - c. He taught them publicly from house to house -- “and taught you publicly and from house to house.” 20
 - d. He admonished the leaders to protect the flock and to keep their own hearts, lives, and faith true to Christ. 28-30
 - e. He affirmed that he had maintained his integrity among them -- he had lived among them in honesty:
 1. “I *am* innocent of the blood of all *men*.” 26
 2. “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” 27
 3. “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.” 33
3. Col. 2:5 “For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ.”
 - a. Even when he was not with the brethren, his thoughts were upon them and how they were doing spiritually.
 - b. He LONGED for them to remain steadfast to Christ!
 4. Gal. 4:19,20 “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.”
 - a. Paul agonized for the Galatian brethren as their faith was being challenged by Judaizers who tried to pull them from Christ.
 - b. He describes his concern as like a woman being in labor -- it hurt his heart to see them waver and some fall!
 5. II Cor. 11:28 “besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.”
 - a. After listing all the sacrifices that he had made for Christ [and he did so with embarrassment], but he was contrasting his devotion to Christ and the Corinthians with the lying false apostles, Paul explained how there was daily concern for the churches that he loved!
 - b. He could not stand the thought of them being deceived and led away by liars!
 6. I Thess. 2:7,8 “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children. ⁸So, affectionately longing for you, we were well

pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”

- a. You hear Paul’s heart for the Thessalonian Christians.
- b. He CHERISHED them as a mother cherishes her baby!

C. Perhaps There Is NO BETTER WAY To Describe What This Congregation Has Meant To Me And My Family For The Last 34 Years Than For You To Hear Paul’s Heart!

1. I have been SO BLESSED to preach the Gospel of Jesus here!
2. Many of you have become Christians as we have studied together.
3. Mission opportunities have abounded, even this past week on the island of St. Vincent in the Caribbean.
4. I have watched your families grow, done your weddings, been with you when children have blessed your homes [been one of the first to hold and kiss your babies and prayed with you for their lives and their eternal destinies], and done weddings of your children.
5. I have been with so many of you when you were hurting deeply -- failures, illnesses, marriage struggles, and deaths of mates and loved ones.
6. I have watched so many of you grow spiritually and know that you will continue to do so and be SO productive for the Lord and this congregation the rest of your lives.
7. Washington Avenue has been held in esteem in our brotherhood; for that I am SO grateful!
8. Our hearts overflow with love for SO many of you who have allowed us to be close, to love you, to serve you, and to serve the Lord together!
9. You have loved my wife; you have supported us through years of a cancer journey that was REALLY tough.
10. We will ALWAYS have you in our hearts; we will always rejoice that our lives have been SO ABUNDANTLY blessed by working with this congregation!
11. We thank God for you -- “Blessed Be The Tie That Our Hearts In Christian Love!”

II. (Slide #5) Appeals:

- A. (►) To The Members Of Washington Avenue -- “To Christ Be Loyal And Be True!”
1. Phil. 2:1,2 “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.”
 2. I Cor 12:25 “that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.”
 3. As I said 3 months ago when I announced this separation, if ANYONE becomes discouraged or leaves because of our changed relationship with this congregation, we will be devastated! I have never asked any of you to follow ME; I have always pointed you to Jesus Christ! Remain with Him!
 4. Some of you can do more than you have; others have allowed sin to hold you back from using your talents -- I pray for your expanded efforts in the future!
- B. (►) To Those Who Have Strayed From Christ, Come Home Today!
1. One of the agonies of a preacher or one who does personal evangelism is when one who is the “son or daughter in the faith” leaves the Lord.
 2. I AGONIZE that some long-time Christians have left; I AGONIZE that some I have taught have stopped living a faithful Christian life!
 3. I appeal to you who have left the Lord [and you have done that if you have quit attending worship!], stop being a prodigal and come home!
 4. Please “Come to yourself, repent, and come home!”
 5. The Godhead and your brethren are early watching for you to make that journey; we will welcome you with open arms!!!! See the story of the Prodigal Son in Lk. 15:20-24
- C. (►) To Those Who Have Gone Off To College, Attended Congregations That Are Practicing Things Unauthorized By Scripture, And Have Adopted Those Practices, I Appeal To You To Return To Loyalty To Christ, His Word, And His Teaching Above All Else! [I make this appeal even if most of them are not here today; they may see this today on Live Stream, on our website, or on You Tube later. I URGE you to give careful consideration to these thoughts!]
1. I am aware that some say, “Washington Avenue is REALLY conservative!” [Some would advocate that it is TOO conservative.]
 2. My question to you: “Are the things that the elders have upheld and that I, Alan, and David have taught true? Can you be faithful to Christ by accepting

and practicing what we have taught and practice? Can we say, “The Lord is pleased with such?” If so, what is the problem?

3. My question to those of you who have accepted practices not authorized by Scripture: “Can you point to the Word of God and say, ‘Here is authority to do this’ or have you succumbed to ‘Well that’s what I think’ or ‘That’s what is being accepted today’”? That is NOT Scriptural authority! And another question, “With what has ALREADY been accepted, WHAT WILL BE NEXT? Because usually one change only leads to another, and another, and another as people rebel against the authority of Christ and go further and further from the authority of Scripture!
 - a. In fact, there was such a movement occurring 34 years ago when I came to Evansville. Sadly many left Washington Avenue; they went further and further away from the Truth and more and more into error.
 - b. If you believe we advocate or uphold error, you have an obligation to correct us!
 - c. As Jesus wrote the first of the seven churches of Asia, Ephesus, He identified their condition:
 1. Rev. 2:4 “Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.”
 2. His call to that congregation: “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent.” Rev. 2:5
- D. (►) Those Who Have Left The Lord’s Church For A Denomination, I Appeal To You To Return To Loyalty To Christ, His Word, And His Teaching Above All Else!
1. My question to those who have left the Lord’s Church to go to denominations: “Where did Jesus say that He built or would save people in human religious institutions? Where did He say that people can be saved by obeying human plans of salvation, ways of worship, etc.?”
 2. Repent and come back to Christ and His Church!
- E. WHY Are These Appeals Important?
1. We all face the last 3 great events of the Bible in our future: Death, Judgment, and Eternity!
 2. Life: SO Fleeting! (Like grass that withers, I Pet. 1:24; like vapor that appears and is gone! Js. 4:14)
 3. Death INSTANTLY ushers us into eternity! In Hades, we will instantly know where we will be eternally!
 4. The Judgment is coming! Heb. 9:27

5. We then go to our eternal home -- Heaven or Hell!

(Slide #6) Conclusion:

- A. Love The Lord; Love His Church; Love Each Other!
- B. May Our Hearts Be Bound IN Christ So We Can Be WITH Christ Eternally!
- C. Is Thy Heart Right With God?