

**1991 Oakland California Firestorm
3000 homes destroyed**



1

**We saw something like this from near our home
with the wind blowing our way**



2

A thought experiment

- Your home is about to be completely destroyed
 - What would you run in to rescue?
- You are forced to leave your home forever on foot
 - What would you carry?
- With no urgency, you are free to focus on what you want to focus on
 - What will your focus be?
 - What is truly most valuable?
 - How should that affect daily life?

3

Above All Else

Acts 20:17-38

Chinese page 1803
 Spanish page 1417
 English-Green page 760
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Acts 20:17-38

- 17:** Paul's last time to see friends & leaders in Ephesus
- 18-21: • He had spent about 3 years teaching and caring
22-24: for the people of Ephesus
- 25-27: • This was his last time to see the leaders
- 28-31: • What did he say?
- 32-35:
- 36-38:

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Acts 20:17-38

- 17: Paul's last time to see friends & leaders in Ephesus
- 18-21:** His authority: his life with them as a model life
- 22-24: • Serving **Christ** in humility, compassion & endurance
- 25-27: • Teaching publicly and privately without hesitation
- 28-31: • Jews and Greeks ***as one church***
- 32-35: • One or the other or separately
- 36-38: would have ended the controversy
- All must turn to God and have faith in Jesus
- Not family heritage
 - Not religious activity
 - Not merely ideas
 - Not superficial change

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Acts 20:17-38

17: Paul's last time to see friends & leaders in Ephesus

18-21: His authority: his life with them as a model life

22-24: His example: God's purpose for him was above all else

25-27: • Trouble ahead in Jerusalem

28-31: • Jews (non-Christians and Christians) were offended by

32-35: Paul's message and example: uniting Jews & Gentiles

36-38: • His only aim: complete the work given by Jesus

- Make known the good news of God's grace to all peoples together

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Acts 20:17-38

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18-21: His authority: his life with them as a model life

22-24: His example: God's purpose for him was above all else

25-27: His lasting commitment: Proclaim God's Gospel

28-31: • Consciously making his last statement

32-35: • A watchman who doesn't warn people is responsible for the losses of those people

36-38: • Must tell "The whole will of God"

- Jew and Gentile in one church together
- By grace alone, not by any religious actions
- Expressed in obedience to God

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28-31: His command: guard the church above all else

32-35: • “**Holy Spirit** made you overseers”

36-38: • It is “the church of **God**”

- It was bought by the blood of **His only Son, Jesus**
- Dangers from the **outside** and dangers from **inside**
- Guard it passionately, night and day

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32-35: For the challenges: trust in God and the Gospel

36-38: • Gospel: build you up & give you true inheritance

- Do not “use” the church to meet your needs
- **God blesses giving** rather than taking
 - True for leaders
 - True for every person in the church

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36-38: They closed in prayer and tears

- Rich fellowship in grief and hope before God

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The Big Idea

The church **and our church**

is priceless to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

owned by God

purchased by Jesus' death

**overseen by shepherds
made & appointed
by the Holy Spirit**

12

What would you dive to rescue?

**Jesus died to purchase
the church for God**

**As people whom Jesus died to save,
what is priceless to Him
must be priceless to us**



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Application

- Value the church as God values the church: **priceless**
 - Not the building, and not merely individuals,
but the community & family of God's children

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“For this is what the Lord Almighty says: ‘After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—**for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye**—I will surely raise my hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then you will know that the Lord Almighty has sent me.’”

Zechariah 2:8-9

apple of the eye = pupil. Something highly cherished and protected

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Paul said: “Christ Jesus came into the world **to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.**”
Here is his worst sin: “**I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man.**”

from 1 Timothy 1:12-15

More specifically: “Saul was still breathing out **murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples**...Jesus said him ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute **me**?’”

Acts 9:1-5

To attack or harm the church & its people is to attack Jesus

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Application

- Value the church as God values the church: priceless
 - Not the building, and not merely individuals but the community/family of God's children
 - The whole community
 - When 1 part suffers, we all suffer:
 - female or male
 - single, married, divorced, or widowed
 - unemployed, underemployed, employed, or student
 - citizen, resident, visitor, or otherwise
 - every ethnicity and race
 - every education level and class in society, and more...

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Application

- Value the church as God values the church: priceless
 - Not the building, and not merely individuals but the community/family of God's children
 - The whole community
 - When 1 part suffers, we all suffer
 - Division breaks God's heart
 - "Separate but equal" is not the heart of God!
 - It isn't "mine" or even "ours". It is God's church
 - For example: We must see problems with tears

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Application

- Value the church as God values the church: priceless
- See the high calling of our connection with the church
 - Board members/elders
 - Appointed & made by the Holy Spirit to oversee the church that was purchased by Jesus' death
 - Ministry team leaders and “ministers” and caring for others
 - Entrusted with the work of God among His people
 - Every person
 - A defender and promoter of God's people
 - There are no godly solo Christians
 - What is your “balance” with the church? >> God blesses giving

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**The church is priceless to God:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
The church should be priceless to
us as well**

**Love and pray for our church,
and for the Church
and give and serve,
for our leaders,
for those who serve,
for those who attend, and
for those who stray**

**Thank you!
Let's grow
together**



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