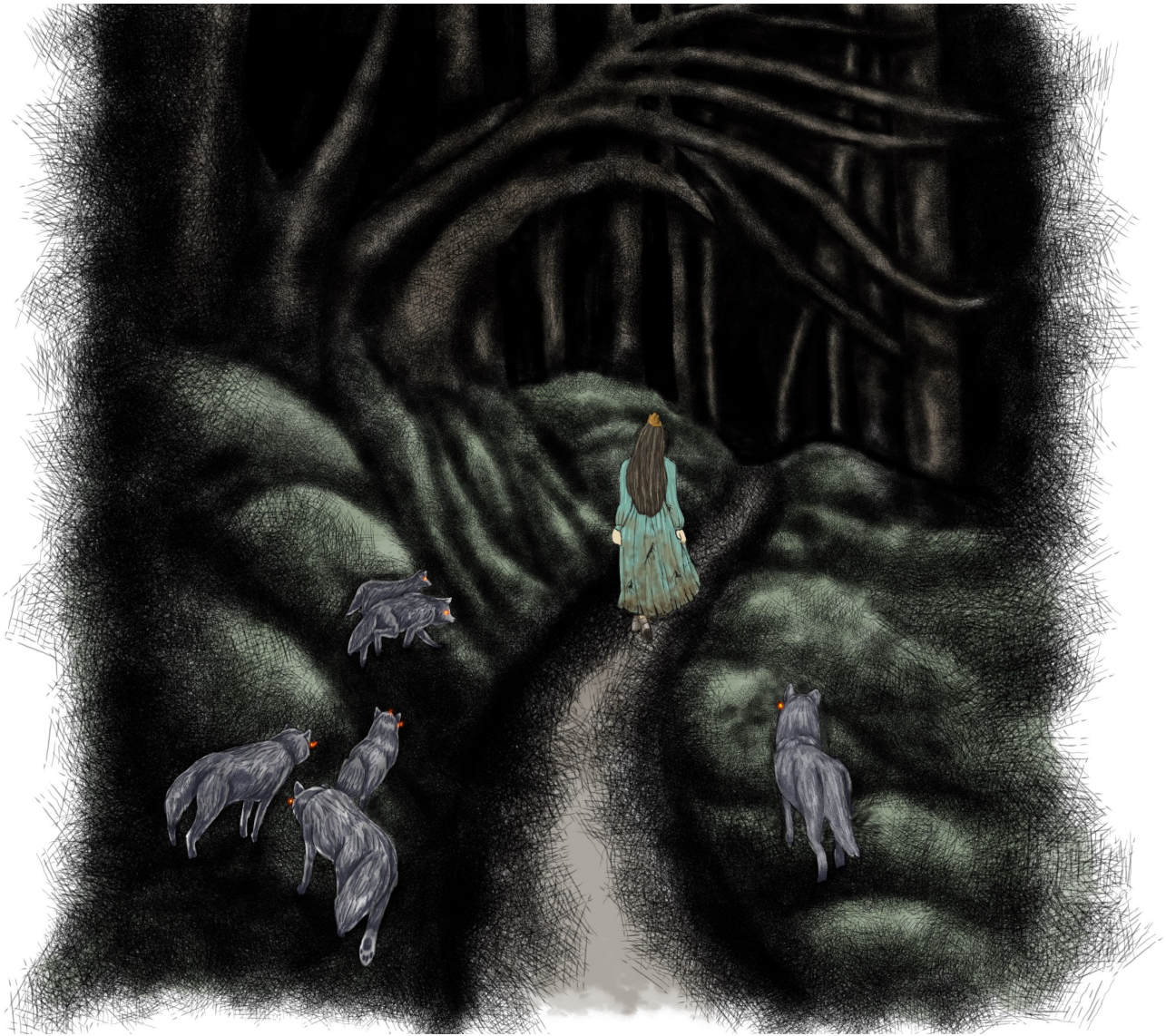


Making the Most of Wednesday, August 26

“...after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you...and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples...” — Acts 20:29



“The long squeeze” — that’s the disciples’ road (Matt. 7:14). Jesus and Paul both said so. Let’s give thanks for the World’s Pastor, the Apostle Paul, who in his spiritual blindness tried to wreck believers (“...I persecuted the church of God — 1 Cor. 15:9). After conversion, Paul himself was “afflicted in every way, but not crushed” (2 Cor. 4:8). God raised him to towering heights as he interpreted and applied the events of Jesus from Nazareth through his 13 pastoral letters. Believers around the world still pour over these 50,000 stunning words because they came not just from his mind, but from the mind of God (“we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” — 1 Cor. 2:13).

Over our three “prayer blocks” today before the Prayer Gathering, we’ll look at Paul’s anguished farewell speech to the Ephesian elders. We’ll see that he wasn’t distressed because “imprisonment and afflictions” (there’s that word again) awaited him in each city he’d pass through. Rather, he agonized over his *sheep* — including the lamb you see in the mirror. We’ll find out why Paul cried for us. First, take a minute to thank the Lord for all the Teacher-Shepherds in your life — both past and present — whether Bible study leaders, small group hosts, Sunday School teachers, wise friends and church staff.

BETWEEN 6:00-9:00 AM: Let's hear Paul's account of his life in Ephesus. Take a pen, pencil or highlighter and mark the words or phrases that allude to his many battles and his burning ambition. Identify that ambition.

17 Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

18 And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia,

19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house,

21 testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

If a prayer impulse comes over you, go with the flow. If not, go on with work, rest or play.

BETWEEN 9:00 AM—12:00 PM: Now we get to the reason for Paul's deep feeling. Again, mark up the passage below. Pretend your pen is a fork. Don't pick at this food. Feast and digest on the words below, remembering that someone wants to eat you! Annotate, underline and bracket phrases that grab you.

25 And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all,

27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

28 Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

The Ephesians had Paul himself for their mentor — the man who wrote 30% of the New Testament. Their ears were graced with wisdom and teaching that we've never heard. Yet, even with these advantages, Paul saw in his prophetic vision that some would still adopt perverted doctrines. Where do you see the wolves at work?

BETWEEN 12:00 PM—3:00 PM: Paul left his friends but he didn't leave them as orphans. He says that he entrusted them not just to God, but to an indispensable resource for success on the long squeeze. Identify this caretaker (v. 32). What will cooperation with this caretaker lead to by way of tangible reward for true believers?

32 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.

The scholar F. F. Bruce put it this way: "In due course Paul, with all the apostles, passed from earthly life; but the teaching which they left behind to be guarded by their successors as a sacred deposit, preserved not only in their memory but eventually in the New Testament scriptures, remains to this day as the word of God's grace."

33 *I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.*

34 *You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.*

35 *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.'*"

Notice v. 35 about rolling up our sleeves and laboring like generations of previous followers of Jesus. On Thursday, August 14, Ralph and Johanna Byrd did just that at City Team. Below is Johanna's report to us.

Last Thursday afternoon Ralph & I had the opportunity to join in the City Team distribution of food and school supplies to about 75 families who live on Poco Way in San Jose. It was fun meeting City Team employees who did a superb job organizing everything, and they had lots of volunteers to help out. Poco Way is a unique site for distribution because it is a tight cul-de-sac with apartment buildings all around. There is no way to have residents drive by to pick up. So they arranged stations for the food & supplies at the end of the cul-de-sac for residents to walk along with their carts. Volunteers stood ready to put food (or supplies) into a residents' cart. Leaders kept watch and made sure those who needed extra help getting things home got that help. Whew! It was hot! Grateful for the cold water they provided us! Ralph was assigned to load a bag of frozen chicken pieces while I had the 1/2 gal of milk per family. Residents were so thankful! It was a joy to serve them! I met some wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ! I especially enjoyed meeting & working with Tanisha & a few others from Vive Church in Evergreen area of San Jose & getting to know Andrea a recent college graduate. When done we enjoyed fruit popsicles provided by the San Jose Police Crime & Safety Unit, who had their Ice Cream truck stationed nearby from the start ready to serve the residents and volunteers. Do this again? Yes!!!



BETWEEN 3:00—4:00 PM: *Join the **Joel Moment Prayer Gathering**. Go to [Zoom.com](https://zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID and Password.*

BETWEEN 5:00-9:00 PM: Let's finish the story of Paul's goodbye address as we wind down the day. Luke tells us that he interceded with (and for) his fellow leaders who now had to remember all that Paul taught and modeled, and now teach and model it themselves. Let's read the last three verses.

36 *And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.*

37 *And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him,*

38 *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.*

Again, Paul lifted up the Ephesian Church elders to God because they would be leading the fledging church without his physical presence. How well did they do? We'll find out on judgment day whether they pleased the Chief Shepherd and gained the "*unfading crown of glory*" (1 Pet. 5:4). Please pray for the Valley Church elders:

Jamie Allen, Alex Auer, Jaime Burnett, Richard de Villiers (leave of absence), Hubert Hsieh, Kurt Jones, Burt Lancaster, See Kit Leong (on sabbatical), Glen Miller, Femi Olumofin and Michael Saboff.



VILLETTE GOTTWALS [You'll hear the story of a woman who is grateful to walk with God.]

^{ESV} **James 4:7** *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

Jot down insights from God through Villette:

LYMAN TAYLOR [We're to worship the Lord according to what he reveals about himself in Scripture. John the Apostle paints quite a portrait of Jesus.]

^{NLT} **Revelation 2:18-29** *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze: ¹⁹ 'I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. ²⁰ 'But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman--that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet-- to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. ²² 'Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. ²³ I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve. ²⁴ 'But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them--depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you ²⁵ except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come. ²⁶ To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations. ²⁷ They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots. ²⁸ They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star! ²⁹ 'Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.*

MARK CARSON [He'll share about personal experience with the Revelation passage that Lyman just read along with thoughts to make us stronger and wiser in a world where traps are set for believers.]

Jot down insights from God through Mark:



GROUP PRAYER PROMPT (30 min.):

ESV **1 John 5:14-15** *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.¹⁵ And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

Here's a list of concerns, but cry out to the Hearing One, according to how he moves in you.

- North Valley Baptist Church has recently been cited and fined for “unlawful” singing. That’s chilling.
- A pastor and 10 others were slaughtered by radical Muslim Fulani Herders in Nigeria. (We’ll talk specifically about affliction from violence directed at believers in the next few weeks as we continue talking about the long squeeze that is life for faithful believers in this pre-Kingdom world.)
- Valley’s three “Church on the Grass” services this Sunday at 4:00 PM, 5:30 PM and 7:00 PM.
- Teachers and students are having a had time of it with online school.
- Virus and fire issues — mixed with thanksgiving for the progress the firefighters have made.
- Here’s an important need in our own church family — tech crew help for our online services.
 - Running lyrics using our computers at service recordings at 7:00 PMish on Wed. nights.
 - Operating cameras at service recordings at 7:00 PMish on Wed. and Thurs. nights.
 - Shining the lights at service recordings at 7:00 PMish on Wed. and Thurs. nights.
 - Sound engineers at service recording at 7:00 PMish on Wed. and Thurs. nights.
 - Editing videos of our recorded services.
 - We’ll teach you how. Daniel Kim is feeling increased pressure. Let’s help him.

Record what God shows you in Joel Moment, Part 2 — that is, the time after 4:00 PM — when we share Scripture, intercede and support each other as the Holy Spirit leads us.