

Brandon Phillips

Foundations of Grace / Ministry; Exaltation of Christ; Equip; Evangelism / Acts 20:15–38
Grace Bible Church exists to exalt God by expositing His word and equipping His saints to evangelize the lost.

Pre-Sermon Comments

[Matthew 16:18](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Upon this rock which you have confessed—upon myself, the Son of the living God—I will build my church. I will build you on myself, and not myself on you. ~

Saint Augustine of Hippo

Sermon Text

[Acts 20:15–38](#) (LSB) ¹⁵ And sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus. ¹⁶ For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost. ¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them, “**You** yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house, ²¹ solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² “And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that chains and

afflictions await me. ²⁴ “But I do not make my life of any account nor dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. 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 purpose of God. ²⁸ “Be on guard for yourselves and for 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. ²⁹ “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ “Therefore be watchful, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. 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 have been sanctified. ³³ “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. ³⁴ “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own* needs and to those who were with me. ³⁵ “In everything I showed you that by laboring in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” ³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they *began* to weep aloud and falling on Paul’s neck, they were kissing him, ³⁸ being in agony especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

Sermon Proposition and Outline

At Grace Bible Church Gainesville, we exist to **Exalt God** by:

- a. **Expositing** His Word
- b. **Equipping** His Saints
- c. **Evangelizing** the Lost

GBC Philosophy of Ministry

Our commitment to and importance of our Philosophy of Ministry

[1 Peter 4:12-13](#) (LSB) ¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you.

¹³ But to the degree you are sharing the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

[2 Peter 1:12](#) (LSB) ¹² Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you *already* know *them*, and have been strengthened in the truth which is present with *you*.

[1 Peter 1:3-5](#) (LSB) ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[2 Peter 1:3-4](#) (LSB) ³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

[2 Peter 1:13-15](#) (LSB) ¹³ I consider it right, as long as I am in this *earthly* dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, ¹⁴ knowing that the laying aside of my *earthly* dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has indicated to me. ¹⁵ And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.

We Exist to Exalt God

[Psalm 34:1-3](#) (LSB) ¹ I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul will make its boast in Yahweh; The humble will hear it and rejoice. ³ O magnify Yahweh with me, And let us exalt His name together.

God is Holy, Holy, Holy

[Matthew 6:9](#) (LSB) ⁹ “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.”

[Isaiah 6:3](#) (LSB) ³ And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory.”

Every human exists to glorify God!

Jesus has the right to rule over His church

[Matthew 6:9-10](#) (LSB) ⁹ “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰ ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.”

[Acts 20:24-27](#) (LSB) ²⁴ “But I do not make my life of any account nor dear to myself,

so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. ²⁵ “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

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 purpose of God.

[2 Timothy 2:11-13](#) (LSB) ¹¹ It is a trustworthy saying: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; ¹² If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we will deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

[2 Timothy 4:18](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom; to Him *be* the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Questions

In [1 Peter 4:12-13](#), Peter tells believers not to be surprised by the "fiery trial." How do you personally respond to suffering for your faith?

Do you find it difficult to maintain joy during these times?

Peter reminds the believers that sharing in Christ's sufferings is a cause for rejoicing ([1 Peter 1:13](#)). How can we cultivate a mindset that rejoices in suffering?

What practical steps can we take?

The sermon emphasizes that at GBC, everything is done to exalt God's name. How can this principle be applied in your daily life?

Are there areas where you struggle to keep God's glory at the forefront?

In [2 Peter 1:12-15](#), Peter speaks about the importance of reminding believers of the truths they already know. Why do you think it is necessary to be reminded of the basics of the faith regularly?

How do you incorporate reminders of God's promises into your life?

In [Acts 20:24-27](#), Paul expresses his commitment to finishing his course and ministry for the exaltation of God. How can we develop a similar mindset in our own lives and ministries?

The sermon states that GBC's ministry is driven by the desire to magnify the Lord's name. How does this philosophy challenge or affirm your understanding of what church ministry should focus on?

Peter and Paul both emphasized encouraging fellow believers. How can your small group better encourage one another to remain faithful and committed to exalting God in the face of challenges?

The Pillars of our Philosophy of Ministry

The Foundation of our Philosophy of Ministry

[Ephesians 2:19-20](#) (LSB) ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, ²⁰

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

Exaltation is the Chief Pillar of our Philosophy of Ministry

Grace Bible Church exists to exalt God by expositing His word and equipping His saints to evangelize the lost.

We Exist to Exalt God by Expositing His Word!

[Acts 20:24-27](#) (LSB) ²⁴ “But I do not make my life of any account nor dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

²⁵ “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. 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 purpose of God.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) (LSB) ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.

[Matthew 17:1-2](#) (LSB) ¹ And six days later Jesus brought with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. ² And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

[2 Peter 1:19](#) (LSB) ¹⁹ And we have as more sure the prophetic word, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

[2 Peter 1:20-21](#) (LSB) ²⁰ Know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes by one’s own interpretation. ²¹ For no prophecy was ever made by the will of man, but men being moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

[Ephesians 2:19-22](#) (LSB) ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, ²⁰

having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, is growing into a holy sanctuary in the Lord,²² in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

[2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) (LSB)¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the man of God may be equipped, having been thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Let him who wants a true church cling to the Word by which everything is upheld. ~ **Martin Luther (Founder of the German Reformation)**

[2 Peter 1:2-3](#) (LSB)² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;

³ seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

[Psalm 19:7-9](#) (LSB)⁷ The law of Yahweh is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of Yahweh is sure, making wise the simple.⁸ The precepts of Yahweh are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of Yahweh is pure, enlightening the eyes.⁹ The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of Yahweh are true; they are righteous altogether.

[Psalm 119:105](#) (LSB)¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

We can define an expository sermon as text-driven preaching, where we derive the sermon's main point and outline from the correct interpretation of the text of Scripture. The preacher arrives at the interpretation through careful exegesis using literal, historical, and grammatical methods. In preaching the text, the preacher carefully explains the God-intended meaning of the text giving its modern implications. — Pastor Brandon Phillips

Discussion Questions

In [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#), Paul emphasizes that "All Scripture is God-breathed." How does this understanding shape our view of the Bible's authority in our lives and the life of the church?

How can this perspective guide our interactions with modern cultural and scientific ideas?

Peter, in [2 Peter 1:19-21](#), elevates the prophetic word above his own eyewitness experience. Why do you think Peter places such importance on the written Word over personal experiences?

What implications does this have for how we prioritize Scripture in our spiritual lives?

The sermon defined expository preaching as "text-driven preaching" derived from careful exegesis. Why is this method of preaching important for the health of the church?

How does it protect against the dangers of adding or subtracting from God's Word?

The sermon concluded with an exhortation to "preach the Word" in every circumstance. How does this call to consistently prioritize Scripture in preaching and teaching challenge you in your own ministry or daily life?

In what ways can you ensure that God's Word remains central in your personal walk with Christ?

According to [Ephesians 2:19-22](#), the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone. How does understanding this foundation help us maintain the integrity of the church today?

How can we ensure that our church's teaching aligns with this foundation?

The sermon emphasized that "all we need is God's Holy Word" and rejected reliance on pop psychology, cultural fads, or politics. What are some current trends or ideas that might tempt us to move away from a Scripture-centered faith?

How can we guard against these temptations?

We Exist to Exalt God by Equipping the Saints!

[Acts 20:27-31](#) (LSB) ²⁷ “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. ²⁸ “Be on guard for yourselves and for 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. ²⁹ “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

³¹ “Therefore be watchful, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

[Ephesians 4:11-14](#) (LSB) ¹¹ And He Himself gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,

What is Equipping?

What is the reason for equipping the saints?

[Ephesians 4:12](#) (LSB) ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,

What is the goal of equipping?

[Ephesians 4:12](#) (LSB) ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ,

Equipping is a constant and consistent practice of the church

[Ephesians 4:13-14](#) (LSB) ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ,

While the world stands God will have a church in it. ~ **Matthew Henry**
(Nonconformist Biblical Exegete)

The church is so constituted that every member matters, and matters in a very vital sense. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

Equipping brings about maturity and protection

¹⁴ so that we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming,

[Acts 20:18-21](#) (LSB) ¹⁸ And when they had come to him, he said to them, “**You** yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

Discussion Questions:

How does [Acts 20:27-31](#) inform our understanding of the need for equipping in the church?

What dangers did Paul highlight that make equipping so crucial?

The sermon suggests that equipping is distinct from the mere proclamation of the Word. In what ways might equipping involve more than just hearing sermons?

How does it lead to spiritual maturity?

The sermon mentions that equipping involves restoration and healing of our brokenness. How have you experienced this restorative work in your own life through the church’s ministry?

[Ephesians 4:12](#) highlights that equipping is for the work of service. How do you see your role in serving within the body of Christ? How can the church help you be better equipped for this service?

According to [Ephesians 4:13-14](#), equipping leads to maturity and protects us from false teachings. How does spiritual maturity help protect us from being led astray by “savage wolves” or deceitful teachings?

Considering the importance of equipping mentioned in the sermon, what steps can you take to ensure that you are being equipped in your daily walk with Christ?

We Exist to Exalt God by Evangelizing the Lost

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

[Matthew 28:18–20](#) (LSB)¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Grace Bible Church exists to exalt God by expositing His word and equipping His saints to evangelize the lost.

The treasury of the church is the liberality of God. The power of the church is the omnipotence of Jehovah. The persuasions of the church are the irresistible influences of the Holy Ghost. The destiny of the church is an ultimate conquest over all the sons of men. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

... the Christian church seems to have a variety of concerns, but in reality it has only one reason for being—and that is to show forth the life and mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

[1 Corinthians 1:17–31](#) (LSB) ¹⁷ For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to proclaim the gospel, not in wisdom of word, so that the cross of Christ will not be made empty. ¹⁸ For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, “I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.” ²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased, through the foolishness of the message

preached, to save those who believe.²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,²⁸ and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may abolish the things that are,²⁹ so that no flesh may boast before God.³⁰ But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,³¹ so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

Discussion Questions

In [Matthew 28:18-20](#), Jesus gives the Great Commission. How does this passage define the mission of every believer? How does this mission connect to the purpose of Grace Bible Church as stated in the sermon?

Reflecting on [Acts 20:21](#), how did Paul’s life demonstrate a commitment to evangelism? What can we learn from his example about the importance of evangelism in our own lives?

The sermon states that the purpose of the church is to exalt God by evangelizing the lost. How does sharing the gospel exalt God?

Can you think of examples from your own life or others’ lives where evangelism has brought glory to God?

[1 Corinthians 1:17-31](#) speaks about the perceived foolishness of the gospel to the world.

What challenges do we face today when sharing the gospel, and how can we overcome them?

Spurgeon emphasized the power of the Holy Spirit in the church's mission. How can we rely on the Holy Spirit in our efforts to evangelize?

What role does prayer play in this reliance?

The sermon emphasizes that every believer has a role in making disciples, whether locally or globally. What specific steps can you take this week to be more intentional about sharing the gospel with those around you?

[1 Corinthians 1:31](#) encourages us to boast in the Lord. How can we ensure that our evangelistic efforts point to God's power and grace rather than our own abilities or wisdom?

Communion

[1 Corinthians 11:27-34](#) (LSB) ²⁷ Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But a man must test himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world. ³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will direct when I come.

The Gospel

Further Quotes

The preservation of the church depends on the mere favour of God. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

Do not hold aloof from the Church; for nothing is stronger than the Church. The Church is your hope, your salvation, your refuge. It is higher than the heavens,

it is wider than the earth. It never waxes old, but is always in full vigor. ~ **John Chrysostom**

The church is still to be reckoned with. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

To stay away from church is to spit in God's face and despise his gift of the kingdom. ~ **R. C. Sproul**

The welfare of the church is inseparably connected with the righteousness of God. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

We must cease to think of the Church as a gathering of institutions and organizations, and we must get back the notion that we are the people of God. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

The church is a workshop, not a dormitory. ~ **Alexander Maclaren (Preacher and Expositor)**

The invisible church is the church as God sees it. ~ **Wayne Grudem**

Large or small—it must be an assembly of believers brought together through a Name to worship a Presence. The blessed thing is that God does not ask whether it is a big church or a little church. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

Of course we believe in the invisible Church, evident to God's eye alone, but we are told to accept the visible Church and remain in communion with it. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

Purity of doctrine is the soul of the church. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

Now the church is not wood and stone, but the company of people who believe in Christ. ~ **Martin Luther (Founder of the German Reformation)**

The reason the church is called the *ekklesia* is that the church is the company of people who have been called out of the world by God. ~ **R. C. Sproul**

The excellence of the church does not consist in multitude but in purity. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

Indeed, I want to show you that the history of the church has been a great fight between two ideas: the false human idea as to what the church is, and the true

one, which is God acting in the church. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

The church is a *worshiping* community, a *witnessing* community, and a *working* community. In other words, the church is to *exalt* the Lord, it is to *evangelize* the world, and it is to *edify* its members. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

A holy church is an awful weapon in the hand of God. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

Wherever the Word of God is preached and heard, there a church of God exists, even if it swarms with many faults. ~ **John Calvin (French Reformer)**

We Christians are the Church and whatever we do is what the Church is doing. The matter, therefore, is for each of us a personal one. Any forward step in the Church must begin with the individual. ~ **A. W. Tozer**

All belong to the visible church, but all do not belong to the invisible church. ~ **David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Welsh Preacher and Writer)**

It is absolutely essential that a church perceive itself as an institution established for the glory of God. I fear that the church in America has descended from that lofty purpose and focused instead on humanity. ~ **John F. MacArthur**

The church and the churches are not the same. ~ **Donald Grey Barnhouse (American Minister)**

I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church. ~ **Charles Spurgeon**

There are no little churches; all churches are the same size in God's sight. ~ **A. W. Tozer**