INTRODUCTION: Paul mirrored the Kingdom life. The people who serve the Lord must have a vision for the future. The Christian who really loves Christ and his church will see needs that are not yet filled and opportunities that are not yet met. He cannot help planning ahead, looking for more ways to serve and for more doors to open.

Ephesians 5:15-16, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

TRANSLATES: “Be very careful, then, how you live, not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

Paul was not content with resting on what he had already accomplished. Sometimes, he had to change his plans, but he had a plan to change. Even while he was living in Ephesus, he was planning the next steps in his ministry, what he would do in Macedonia, Corinth, and then Jerusalem.

We have had a most blessed past. I personally sense that God is with us in mighty power in our present. However, I believe our future (potential) is as bright as the promises of God. I am not interested in leading us to rest on our past laurels, but to continue to seek to honor Christ as we obey His commands and commission.
I. POSSESSIONS WE WISH TO GIVE. 1-4

- What’s important to you is what will become important to them.

- *Never miss anything we give away.* Odus Scruggs

- “I wish to give while my hands are warm.” David Carroll

- “Never more like Jesus than when we are giving.” Augustine, *“The Lord has been good to me; He has given me more than I need, but reminds me that others need it.”*

- Emulation/Exhortation

The Apostle Paul had a burden for the poor Jews in Jerusalem and as a result, he received an offering from the churches to help them during their hardship.

Maybe you will remember that the church at Macedonia had begged to be involved.

Paul encouraged them to give as they had prospered; translates good journey. The amount to be given was in direct proportion to God’s financial blessing upon their lives. People who give to the cause of missions grow in their love for the cause to which they give. Plus, Paul knew that participating in the offering, either as a giver or a recipient, would create a bond.
II. PLACES WE NEED TO GO. 5-9

A. OPPORTUNITIES. 5-7

Paul was planning out his third missionary journey. On Paul’s second missionary journey God had forbidden him to preach in Asia, but now God has opened the closed door.

All of Paul’s plans are controlled by four words in v.7 “if the Lord permits”. It is important for us to realize that at any moment Paul is ready to change his direction if God reveals a different one. The Lord’s will is permanent in his life. His life is gloriously unsettled and his steps are ordered by the Lord. We must pray that God will stir our hearts and cause us to anticipate the opportunities He gives us.

Our fondest ambitions and our most determined plans are always to be subject to the express will and purpose of God. No one can be the “captain of his own fate and master of his own destiny.”

His “yes” stayed on the table

B. OPEN DOORS. 8-9

“effective door” – powerful and active; from the base at Ephesus, all of Asia was evangelized. Paul spent 3 years here.
Acts 19:10, “And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

Paul wanted to seize the opportunities while the doors were open. As we study Paul’s life and his missionary journeys, we discover that he characteristically went to large, well-populated cities. He realized that if he could stab the hearts of the great population centers with the flag of the gospel of Christ, they would have tremendous influence in spreading the gospel.

C. OBSTACLES. 9

There are doors God has wonderfully opened and doors Satan has woefully opposed.

When we are looking for a place to serve the Lord, we should look for a place with problems, for a church that is discouraged.

We can’t win a victory without a battle. In fact, if there is no opposition, one wonders if the work we are doing is really being blessed by the Spirit.

Instead of complaining about the obstacles, we must take advantage (capture) of the opportunities and leave the results to God.

III. PEOPLE WE WISH TO GROW. 10-19

Paul wanted to teach every Christian everything he could at every opportunity he had. Paul was a people person, not an agenda person.
He mentions simple, ordinary people being used in extraordinary ministries.

A. THE MENTEE. 10-11

Paul hoped to move Timothy from fearfulness to faithfulness and fearlessness.

1 Timothy 4:12, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

Don’t look down on your youthfulness.

v.10 “He does the work of the Lord” – the youth were devoted followers of Jesus Christ. We must have a plan to raise up a new generation.

The oldest generation may indeed be the “greatest” but it must not be the last.

Jimmy Draper said, “Bring the next generation behind you, with you.”

Adrian Rogers said, “Every generation needs generals.”

Mentoring where the younger learns from the older, and reverse mentoring, where the elder learns from the younger.
B. MENTORS. 12

“Apollos” – noted as a great orator; mighty in scriptures, well known for eloquence.

Acts 18:24-28, “Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord: and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John. So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace: for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.”

1. HE HAD A TESTIMONY

2. HE WAS TEACHABLE

C. MINISTRY SERVANTS. 15-18

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus

Stephen’s entire family served the Lord on their own initiative. Once they were converted, they spontaneously assigned themselves to help meet any
need. Their service was self-motivated and self-assigned.

**v.15** “devoted themselves to ministry” – ministry originally meant table waiters or household servants. Idea of humble, submissive, personal service.

Psalms 18:2, “The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.”

**v.18** “refreshed my spirit and yours” – to give rest. Christ’s rest is not rest from work, but a rest in work.

**v.18** “acknowledge such men” – respect, appreciation, also recognition. *(v.16)* says to “submit to such”

**D. MINISTRY LEADERS. 19**

Romans 16:3-4, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”

They had churches in their home in Ephesus and Corinth.
E. MINISTRY PRINCIPLES. 13-14

FIVE IMPERATIVES:

1. Watch.

   Be alert to the enemy, temptation, apathy, indifference

2. Stand Fast in the Faith.

   Don’t be moved by false doctrine or loose morals

3. Be Brave.

   “quit you like men” – be mature, grow up, don’t be childish

4. Be Strong.

   Denotes inner, spiritual growth; passive voice means be strengthened. Our part is to submit ourselves to Him in order that He can strengthen us.

5. All That You Do Be Done With Love.

   Love compliments and balances everything else. It is the softening principle. It keeps our firmness from becoming harshness and our strength from becoming domineering. It keeps our maturity gentle and considerate. It keeps our right living from becoming smug, self-righteousness.
1 Peter 4:8, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for ‘love will cover a multitude of sins.’”

1 John 4:7, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”

IV. PERSON WE WISH TO GLORIFY. 20-24

It is seen in:

A. OUR AFFECTION FOR THE SAINTS. 20

Outward, visible affection.

B. OUR AFFECTION FOR THE SAVIOR. 22

Phileo – to have tender affection; not agape – supreme love. Such a person proves beyond doubt that he does not belong to the Lord. The warning is against those whose lack of love for the Lord proves their lostness.

Maranatha is Paul’s appeal or invitation to those lost to receive Christ.

Anathema – Accursed

Romans 9:3, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh”
v.24 Paul publicly expressed his love for the saints. I believe the Lord is glorified when we love Him and each other.

**CONCLUSION:** If the Lord permits, I hope we can have possessions to give, places to go, people to grow, and a person to glorify.