

PAUL'S FAREWELL TO THE EPHESIAN ELDERS  
Acts 20:13-38

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Paul was in charge of his ministry vs. 13
  - 1) He occasionally contacted the church in Antioch, but they did not lay out his work.
  - 2) He appointed the ship and others.  
diatasso = "to arrange throughout, to set fully in order, "appoint", "ordain". He knew God's will for his life.
  - 3) "minding himself to go on foot"  
mello = "to be about to do anything", "to be on the point of it"
  - 4) He would walk about 20 miles on a paved road
  
- B. Paul met them later at Assos vs. 14
  - 1) Here Paul came aboard
  - 2) They continued to Miletus vs. 15
  
- C. Paul did not wish to stop at Ephesus vs. 16
  - 1) "because he would not spend time in Asia"
  - 2) He wished to be in Jerusalem by Pentecost
  - 3) "hasted" = speudo = "to urge on", "to make haste", "having respect simply to time", "to urge oneself on"
  - 4) "not spend the time" = chronos + tribo = "time" + tribo = "to rub together", "to wear out by rubbing together"
  
- D. Paul sent for the Elders of the church vs. 17
  - 1) "sent" = pempo = "to send", "to simply let go", This does not have the force and authority of
  - 2) "called" = metakaleo = "to call", "to summon", "there is the idea of changing places"
  - 3) "elders" = presbuteros = "old", "one that is conspicuous or distinguished". Same as Anglo-Saxon "eldermen" our word is alderman.
  
- I. The Characteristics of Paul's Ministry in Asia vs. 18-21
  - A. Paul was steady in his work
    - 1) "ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia"
      - a. "ye know" = epistami = "to know", "to understand", "primarily expresses the knowledge obtained by proximity to the thing known"
      - b. "first" = epibaino = "to set foot on"
    - 2) "after what manner I have been with you at all seasons"
      - a. "manner" = "how I came with you"
      - b. "season" = chronos = "duration", "time", "about my way of life all the time I was with you" Rieu.
      - c. Paul's ministry was approximately 32 years in length. This would have been one tenth of his ministry. A man who Pastor's gives his life.

B. Paul slaved for the Lord vs. 19

- 1) "serving" = douleo = "to serve as a slave" To have one's actions directed by another.
- 2) Paul was not a slave of the elders.
- 3) "humility" = tapeinophrosune = The recognition of one's weakness as well as of God's power.
- 4) "tears" = dakru = "a tear", "tears"
- 5) "temptations" = peirasmos = "a putting to the test"
- 6) "lying in wait" = epiboulais = "plots"

C. Paul had taught the Elders boldly vs. 20

- 1) "kept back" = hupostello = "to draw under", "to keep back", "suppress", because of fear. Language of the sailor and means to draw back or down the sails of a ship.
- 2) "profitable" = hophelimos = "helping", "aiding", "useful", "serviceable", "advantageous"
- 3) "shewed" = anaggello = "to report back", "send news back", "to report", "notify", "announce"
- 4) "taught" = didasko = "to teach", "to give instruction or direction"
- 5) "publicly" = demosia = "in public", "before the people" Acts 18:28. This is used adverbially!
- 6) "house to house" = kata oikon = "down towards", in reference to time, "at" or "in" Robertson = "according to" Bullinger "at home", "in meetings and in homes"

II. Paul's Plans and Expectations vs. 22-25

A. He felt compelled to visit Jerusalem vs. 22

- 1) "bound" = deo = "to fasten", "tie"
- 2) "in the spirit" = Paul's, not Holy Spirit vs. 23
- 3) "I do not know what will happen to me there except in every city I visit the Holy Spirit emphatically warns me of prison and pain."
- 4) "bonds" = desmos = "a bond", "anything for tying"
- 5) "afflictions" = thlipsis = "pressure"

B. Paul had counted the cost vs. 24

- 1) "But none of these things move me"  
"However, I am not concerned about anything"
- 2) "neither count I my life dear unto myself"  
echo = "to have, to hold", "implying continued having or possession", "to have as in the mind"
- 3) "So that I might finish my course with joy"  
"finish" = teleo = "to bring about", "complete", "fulfill"  
"course" = dromos = "a running", "a race",  
metaph. = a career  
"joy" = chara = "delight", "gladness", "to be pleased with"

- 4) "and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus"  
"ministry" = diakonia = "to do a service", "care for one's needs"
- 5) "to testify the gospel of the grace of God"  
diamarturomai = [see I, D.1)]

- C. Paul did not think he would see them again vs. 25
- 1) He had every reason to believe this
  - 2) Paul did return - I Tim. 1:3; 3:14; 4:13

III. Paul's Personal Responsibility to Them vs. 26-27

- A. Paul had freed himself from them vs. 26
- 1) "record" = marturomai = "to call to witness"
  - 2) "this day" = "the day today", "our parting day"
  - 3) "pure" = katharos = "pure from everything that would change or corrupt the nature of the subject"  
"that my conscience is clear in regard to the fate of any of you" TCNT  
"that, should any of you perish, the responsibility is not mine" Wey

"I am pure" comes from "Katharos". Aristotle used this word to describe the reaction of an audience to Greek drama. It was designed to bring out the emotions of people and create in them an attitude of worship. Greek drama was designed to lead people to an attitude of worship for the Greek Gods. Now this word does mean clean, pure, ceremonially clean, but as used here by Paul, it is referring mainly to responsibility Paul knew the scope of his responsibility to the Lord. Paul knew he had been called of God and prepared by God for the special work of building a platform for the churches of the world. So Paul's responsibility was to believers. He was a pastor at large and his main task was to communicate Bible doctrine you have to know doctrine. To know doctrine you have to study doctrine. It is a never-ending task. So Paul studied and taught, studied and taught, studied and taught. From this we get a principle. A pastor is not to be primarily a crutch for his people to lean on, neither is he primarily to be a counselor. His chief task is not to go around and pat people on the back to make them feel good. A pastor cannot spend the major portion of his time in administration and promotion and serve as a goodwill man if he is going to discharge his responsibility to the people. The church member has a right to expect from the pastor an accurate teaching and interpretation of the Word of God. Now this is exactly what Paul meant in this phrase when he said, "I am pure". This phrase meant he had accurately and carefully discharged his responsibility to these people. Paul did not mean by the phrase, "I am pure" that he had reached sinless perfection. Paul knew quite well his own limitations. But he also knew he had been true to the responsibility placed upon him. He did the will and work of God by consistently teaching Bible doctrine to the people in the churches and to the pastors. So this verse in a very special way pinpoints the responsibility of the pastor - and that is to give Bible doctrine out to the people. I am now going to make a statement that may shake some of you up in your minds, but it is true. The statement is this - the PRIMARY responsibility of the pastor toward you is not to love you, to pray for you, and to say nice things about you. The pastor's PRIMARY responsibility toward you is to fill your mind with Bible truth. To be sure a true pastor will love you, pray for you, and try to help you in every way but these things are not PRIMARY. So the result of Paul's work was this - the people who heard him became self-sustaining and they learned not to lean on him but they learned how to lean on the Lord. Let us state this principle again - the important thing is not the man but the message.

PAUL'S NEVER-ENDING TASK

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS  
ACTS 20:20-26  
NUMBER 94

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ACTS 20:20-26

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house. Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men."

The Pastor's Conference at Miletus was about to come to an end. Those pastors had listened to Paul teach Bible doctrine and he had given them basic Bible truth. But Paul was convinced that he would see their faces no more, realizing that he probably would never come that way again. So these parting words of instruction are very personal and touching.

ACTS 20:26

"Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men." In this verse Paul stated a very basic principle which he followed in all his teaching. "Dia" plus the accusative should always be translated "Because of this". So Paul says, "Because of this I witness before you this day that I am pure from the blood of all men". This is a bold declaration for Paul to make and he is saying to them that he had done everything within his power in order to make them self-sustaining.

B. The basis of such a statement vs. 27

- 1) "not shunned" = hupostello = "to draw under", "to draw one's self back under cover or out of sight", "to keep back under cover or out of sight", "to keep back anything" [same as vs. 20]
- 2) "declare" = anaggello = "to notify", "to bear a message back"
- 3) "all the counsel of God" = boule = "will", "determination", "purpose", "design", "plan", "advice"
- 4) Is it possible to be free of the blood of others? YES!

IV. Paul's Warning to the Ephesian Elders vs. 28-

A. They were to "take heed"

- 1) "heed" = prosecho = "to hold to or bring near", "to turn one's mind or attention to a thing", "be intent"
- 2) Take heed to yourselves, first
- 3) "and to all the flock"  
"flock" = poimnion = "a little flock"

B. They were overseers of the "flock"

- 1) "hath made" = tithemi = "to place", "to appoint"
- 2) "overseers" = episkopos = epi = "over" + eskopei = "continuing or careful scrutiny" The ancient usage spoke of deities as "graciously to look down upon", "to care for", "to look over" In the Septuagint Deut. 11:12, Canaan is described as "upon which God looks down in grace". Jesus used it in Matthew.
- 3) "of which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians" Mof.
- 4) This is probably the sense of Paul's meaning. His warning is against "wolves" vs. 29

B. Episkeptomai / Episkopeo in the NT. Kittel's TDNT

1. Jesus undoubtedly knew of the high estimation of the visiting of the sick in Rabbinic ethics. He is adapting formulae such as we find in Sota, 14a when he says that at the Last Judgment the Son of Man will give the kingdom to those to whom He can say: "I was...sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Mt. 25:35 f., 42f.). Jesus is obviously thinking of the Jewish works of love, but He places the men of all nations (v. 32) under the same command and judges them according to the measure of their fulfillment. Yet in two respects He takes a deeper view. It is not a question of isolated acts, but of a fundamental attitude. Man has to realize that he does not exist of and for himself, but of and for the other. This is to be expressed in his actions. But God is present in this existence with and for others. Jesus makes this clear when He says that what is done or not done to the least of His brethren is done or not done to Him.

James adopts both the best tradition in Jewish ethics and the demand of Jesus for practical love to our neighbours when he says in 1:27: "Pure religion before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction"

2. Even when episkeptesthai means "to seek out someone" in the NT, it never implies merely "to visit" them in the usual sense, or for selfish ends, but always "to be concerned" about them, with a sense of responsibility for others. Thus Stephen shows in Ac. 7:23 how there arose in the heart of Moses, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, a desire to go to his brothers, his fellow-country-men. He seeks them out because he belongs to them and shares responsibility for their destiny. The saying of Paul to Barnabas in Ac. 15:26 is both verbally and materially similar: "Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city...and see how they do." The visit which they plan to the churches founded by them has the character of a visitation executed in virtue of their apostolic office and commission.

#### 4. Episkopos as a Designation of Office.

In ancient Greece the word episkopos was used in many different ways to describe those who held various official positions in respect of their office and work.

a. In Athens in the 4th and 5th cent. episkopos is a title for state officials. We know this especially from Aristophanes, who in Av., 1022 f. tells of the arrival of an episkopos in the bird kingdom Cloud Cuckoo Land. That he is alluding to real historical models is proved by glosses on his poetry and by inscriptions on which the office appears as depicted by Aristophanes. Acc. to Harpocration, s.v. the episkopoi were supervisors sent by the Athenians to the cities of subject members of the Attic League. They were chosen by lot from Athenian candidates and then sent to their respective cities, where they were in some sense governors, though there is uncertainty as to the exact scope of their office. Their main concern was for public order and for the avoidance of friction with Athens. It is likely that they also had some judicial powers. They were maintained by the city in which they officiated. That they were not loved may be gathered from the caricature in Aristophanes.

#### C. They were to feed the church

- 1) "feed" = poimaino = "to exercise the whole office of a poimen = " (a shepherd), "which involves feeding grass", (poia), "but the entire leading, guiding, guarding, folding, of the flock"
- 2) Its hard to take one and not the others!

#### D. The church is a precious institution

- 1) "to feed the church of God. This is not a name but a designation of ownership"
- 2) "purchased" = peripoieo = "to get and to keep for one's self", "gain possession of", "to make over and above", "to save up" Luke 17:33 (preserve)

- 3) "with his own blood"  
God set the price and God paid the price! He bought it with His own blood. How much He loved it! How high the price! How great the desire!
- 4) God did not value His blood (life) to the point of saving it but gave His son's (His own) blood to purchase the church.

V. Satan's Method of Attacking the Flock vs. 29

A. He will attack from without

- 1) "For I know that", There is no doubt!
- 2) "after my departing" = aphixis = "an arrival", "a coming to a place", "a departure regarded in the light of its end and object". It will occur only after Paul's coming and going. After Paul is gone.
- 3) "shall grievous wolves enter in among you" = barus = "heavy", "oppressive", "afflictive", "violent"
- 4) "not sparing the flock"  
"sparing" = pheidomai = "to abstain from using or doing anything", "will do anything to violently damage"
- 5) "flock" = poimnion = "a little flock"
- 6) Jesus warned of such an attack. Matt. 7:15 - "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

B. He will attack from within vs. 30

- 1) "Also of your own selves shall men arise" [ex humoe autoe]  
"From among your own selves" This has reference to the assembled Elders"
- 2) "speaking perverse things"  
"perverse" = diastrepho = "to turn or twist throughly", "distort", "turn away", "pervert"
- 3) "to draw away disciples after them"  
apospao = "to draw from", "pull away", "as from the scabbard" They would draw away completely sheep to shepherd.

VI. The Two Acts of a True Shepherd vs. 31

A. "Therefore, watch"

- 1) "Therefore" = dio = "Because of all these things"
- 2) "watch" = gregoreo = "to keep awake", "be on the alert"
- 3) The very same command that Jesus gave. Mark 13:35 "watch ye, therefore; for ye know not when the master...."

B. "and remember"

- 1) mnemoneuo = "to call to one's own mind" Act.
- 2) "that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears"
- 3) "ceased not" = pauo = "to make an end", "to come to an end", "to take one's rest" Paul never quit warning.



- 4) "with tears" = Paul plead continuously, tearfully warning, night and day, teaching them of the things they must guard against.

## VII. The Answer to the Threat

vs. 32

### A. "And now, brethren I commend you to God"

- 1) "commend" = paratithemi = "to place with anyone on one's own account", "to commit", "to entrust as a deposit"
- 2) "I deposit you with God"
- 3) II Tim. 1:12 - "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."
- 4) What else can we do with things of infinite value and worth? I do not want them in my own hands! "I deposit you with God, and the Bible."

### B. "and to the word of His grace"

- 1) "and to His gracious word"
- 2) This has reference to doctrine

### C. The power of the preached word

- 1) "which is able to build you up"  
"able" = dunameno = "power to do a thing", "inherent power"  
"build" = oikodomeo = "to construct a house", "edify"
- 2) "and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"  
"inheritance" = klerouomia = "that which makes one a receiver or possessor of a portion", "the inheritance"
- 3) Ephesians 1:11, 18 - The fact of an inheritance
- 4) Ephesians 1:13 - The guarantee of an inheritance

## VIII. Paul's Personal Integrity Declared

vs. 33-35

### A. Paul had not desired their personal items

vs. 33

- 1) "coveted" = epithumeo = "to fix the desire upon", "desire earnestly". It denotes the affection of the mind.
- 2) "gold", "silver", apparel". "He includes "apparel" because oriental wealth consisted largely in fine apparel. (not old, worn out clothes) A.T. Robertson
- 3) He never claimed their personal items in the name of Jesus

### B. Paul earned his own living and move

vs. 34

- 1) "these hands have ministered to my necessities" Some public
  - a. "ministered" = hupereteo = "to serve", "to do service free"
  - b. "necessities" = chreia = "use", "need", "poverty"
- 2) "and to them that were with me"

C. Paul demonstrated the Lord's teaching vs. 35

- 1) "shewed" = hupodeiknumi = "to show under one's eyes", "to give an object lesson". The best object lesson!
- 2) "labouring" = kopiao = "to beat out", "to be weary"
- 3) "support" = antilambanomai = "to take hold of in one's turn", "to interest one's self for", "to take hold yourselves at the other end" A.T. Robertson - "Grab the other end"
- 4) "weak" = astheneo = "to be weak or ill", "feeble"
- 5) "remember" = mnemoneuo = "have in memory", "to call to one's own mind"
- 6) "words" = logon = "the teaching", "sayings"
- 7) "blessed" = makarios = "happy"
- 8) "give" = didomi = "to give", "to present", "unforced"
- 9) "receive" = lambano = "to take", "to receive from another", "pointing to an objective reception"

IX. Paul's Tearful Good-bye vs. 36-38

A. "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all" vs. 36

- 1) Paul ended his farewell address in a kneeling position, a sign of submission.
- 2) "he knelt in prayer with the whole group" Riev. T.N.T. 26 Ts

B. "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him" vs. 37

- 1) "wept sore" = ginomai = "to become" + klauthmos = "a wailing, not merely with tears, but with every outward expression of grief"
- 2) "as they folded Paul in their arms and kissed him"

C. "Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more"

- 1) "sorrowing" = odunaomai = "to be distressed", "to be moved with pain"
- 2) "It hurt them most of all that he had said that they would never see his face again"
- 3) The truths of the Ephesian letter are why they wept so copiously.

D. "And they accompanied him unto the ship"

- 1) "accompanied" = propempe = "to send forward, to accompany, to escort"
- 2) They went as far as they could with Paul

X. The Church at Ephesus was Slow to Communicate

A. They accepted Paul's ministry as a gift - I Cor. 9:7-14

- 1) He labored with his own hands
- 2) He never ate from their vine
- 3) He never drank milk from the flock
- 4) He went to war of his own charges
- 5) He suffered their wrong

B. They did not support his ministry

- 1) Philippians 4:15 - "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me concerning giving and receiving, but ye only!"
- 2) They had no shared account!

C. This was a flaw in the church

- 1) II Cor. 12:13 - "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong"
- 2) "inferior" = elattoo = "to make less or smaller", "to lessen", "diminish", "damage"
- 3) "wrongs" = adikia = "what is not in conformity with dike (right); what it ought not to be, wrong"

