

ACTS 20:22-32

Introduction:

We've seen in verses 18-21 how Paul **reminds** these Ephesian elders of his godly testimony, when he had been with them for 3 years in the past. He had taught them about **grace** salvation and what was needed for their maturity.

A. Now Paul gives his testimony about the present (vs. 22-27).

Acts 20:22-23 - And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Acts 20:23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

1. Paul's spirit had worked in him, by a strong **compulsion**, to fulfill his ministry that God had commissioned him to do. Paul's sense of duty and responsibility drove him on his way to Jerusalem.

Here Paul **opens his heart as he shares his desire to go to Jerusalem. He hoped he would be able to help the Jerusalem saints, which continually drove him toward that wish.

Acts 19:21 - After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome.

Romans 15:30-31 - Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in *your* prayers to God for me; Rom. 15:31 That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints;

2. Paul shares that he is not sure of the coming consequences of that decision. He knows there is danger and even the possibility of **death** by going there. One thing is clear, Paul did not believe he would see the Ephesians **ever** again.

a. Note: Though uncertainty awaited Paul, he continued forward, no doubt, in faith and prayer. It was a little later that Paul found out **what** would happen to him at Jerusalem.

Acts 21:10-11 - And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. Acts 21:11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.

b. At times, **we** face uncertainties and difficulties that we are not sure how it will all turn out - but we trust God and keep moving forward.

Acts 20:24 - 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.

1. Paul's future had suffering awaiting him. He did not know if his sufferings would lead to his death. But regardless, Paul was **prepared** for that if it happened.

*Paul was already dead (Galatians 2:20)!

**Paul had already resolved in his mind and heart to finish his race.

Acts 21:13 - Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

2. What did matter to Paul was that he should finish his course by being faithful to the **new** revelational message that God had given and **entrusted** to him. That message was [the gospel of the grace of God].

Galatians 1:11-12, 15-16 - But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. Gal. 1:12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught *it*, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Gal. 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called *me* by his grace, Gal. 1:16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Romans 11:13 - For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

Romans 16:25 - Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

Ephesians 3:1-9 - For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, Eph. 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: Eph. 3:3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Eph. 3:4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Eph. 3:5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; Eph. 3:6 That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Eph. 3:7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Eph. 3:8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; Eph. 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

<p><u>Acts 20:25</u> - And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more.</p>

1. Paul rightly believed that this present group of believers would not see him again. Whether this meant his upcoming death or that his future plans would take him elsewhere, he wasn't sure. But whatever happened, Paul had done an incredible job of teaching and training the Ephesians. He had the confidence that they were ready to minister on their **own**.
2. [preaching the kingdom of God] - This term, at times, is a very broad one. At times, it refers to God being over everything that He has created. Again at times, it refers to God's rule in the area of **salvation**, as men preach the gospel. And again, mostly in the O.T., Gospels and early Acts 1-7, it can refer to Israel's promised earthly millennial Kingdom, where Christ will sit and rule from Israel.
 - a. Note: To determine which one it is, we need to see to whom God is writing, what it is about, when in scripture it was written, and why it was written. So context **d**etermines its interpretation.

- b. When speaking to the Jews in the synagogues, Paul would of course tell them what had become of the **offer** of the establishment of the Kingdom on earth. He would tell them how it was **rejected** by the religious leaders of Israel in Jerusalem and how/why it has been **postponed** until later.

Romans 11:25-27 - For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. Rom. 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: Rom. 11:27 For this *is* my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

- c. Here in verse 25 of Paul's message, the context is God's role in salvation. Paul had just stated in verse 24 that he was commissioned to proclaim [the gospel of the grace of God].

Acts 20:26-27 - Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*.
Acts 20:27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

1. Paul had thoroughly fulfilled his obligation of teaching God's Word to these Ephesians. If any did not learn, or if any drew away from the faith, it surely was not Paul's fault. Paul had taught them **all** the counsel of God. No man's **blood** could ever be laid on him.

Remember: Ezekiel 33:6 - [But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.]

2. Also, these two verses show us the seriousness and **responsibility** that all believers (especially leaders) have to tell God's truth.

James 3:1 - My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation.

3. Here Paul challenges and warns these elders that they will stand before God one day to **give** an account of their message to the lost and saved.

II Corinthians 5:10-11 - For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.
2Cor. 5:11 Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

- B. **So we have seen Paul's testimony about the past (vs. 18-21), his testimony about the present (vs. 22-27), and now we will see his testimony about the future (vs. 28-38).

1. Paul brings his farewell message to a close by warning these Ephesian elders about the **dan**gers they

Acts 20:28 - Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

needed to recognize, so they could **pro**tect and lead the church.

2. We should never **under**estimate the importance of the Church (Body and Local Church). The Father's name is upon it [the Church of God], the Son purchased it [through His own blood], and [the Holy Ghost] burdens and equips the elders [to feed the church].
3. [Take heed] means to be careful and to be on guard. The leader has to have a **deep** relationship with God or he will never be able to face the responsibility of ministry and **pressures** - that are often.

*Paul is trying to prepare them for the **coming** attacks and difficulties within the church.

Acts 20:29 - For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

1. It is vital that the pastor teaches God's Word to the Church. But, it is equally important to protect the flock from **false** teachers.

Example: Galatians 1:6-7 - [I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Gal. 1:7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.]

2. Understand, whenever the truth is proclaimed (especially dispensationally), Satan can be counted on to try and counter truth with false doctrine. Paul describes these false teachers as **wolves**, indicating their savage nature with little respect for the church. Satan wants to **destroy** God's church (T.T.).

1. How natural it is for unstable, immature, **car**nal believers to follow false teachers among them. Paul

Acts 20:30 - Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

knew this could and would happen, because he understood that man's flesh and the devil together would **con**spire to overthrow God's church.

2. True to Paul's prediction - notice:

II Timothy 2:16-18 - But shun profane *and* vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 2Tim. 2:17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 2Tim. 2:18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

II Timothy 1:15 - This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

3. Paul is saying that if the elders are not vigilant, the wolves will drag away and devour their sheep.

Jude 3-4 - Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jude 1:4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:31 - Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

1. The faithful must **warn** the flock (church) of error. Paul had done this and with compassion [night and day with tears]. This shows Paul's care-burden for individual believers. Paul knew the **con**sequences of false teachers infiltrating the church.

Romans 16:17-18 - Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. Rom. 16:18 For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

2. This also shows how **easy** it is for good churches, true to Christ and His Word, to not naturally remain that way. This is because of the forces within and from without that are strong.

This is also true of individual believers. Not one of us should trust **ourselves! It is vital that we know and live within God's Word.

1. In view of his departure from them and of their upcoming spiritual battles, Paul now turns them **over**

Acts 20:32 - And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

[to God, and to the word of his grace].

2. This word was Paul's particular message which he had been commissioned to proclaim. It was Paul's message for the **new** dispensation that was dawning, and it was the grace message that God would continue to use to establish them in the future.

*Note the similarity with: Romans 16:25 - [Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,]

3. Today, overall, the church is weak, ill, or **asleep** to truth. It is because the church has **failed** to follow Paul's instructions that are able to ground and give understanding to all we are and have in Christ.

It is God's Word, **rightly divided, that helps the Church to stand powerfully.

II Timothy 4:2 - Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.