

Paul's Farewell Address

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INTRODUCTION

Acts 20:17-35 preserves Paul's farewell address to the Ephesian elders, which indirectly contains vital lessons relevant for us today.

Acts 20:17-35 (NASB95) — 17 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 of 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 bonds and afflictions await me. 24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as 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 men. 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 on the alert, 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 are 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 the men who were with me. 35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard 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.'"

PAUL'S CHARACTER

He was Constant

Paul said, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time" (v. 18). His message was consistent and his efforts were constant: day and night, publicly and privately, from the first day he set foot in Asia until the hour of his departure (vv. 20, 31).

Acts 20:18 (NASB95) — 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,

Acts 20:20 (NASB95) — 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

Acts 20:31 (NASB95) — 31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

He was Humble

During his Ephesian ministry, Paul was "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews" (v. 19).

Acts 20:19 (NASB95) — 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

He was Diligent

The apostle declared, "I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house" (v. 20).

Acts 20:20 (NASB95) — 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

He was Serious

He devoted himself to "solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 21).

Acts 20:21 (NASB95) — 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He was Courageous

Paul was courageous, and despite the dangers, undaunted: “I do not consider my life of any account as 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” (Acts 20:22-24).

Acts 20:22-24 (NASB95) — 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 bonds and afflictions await me. 24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as 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.

He was Realistic

He said, “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face” (v. 25).

Acts 20:25 (NASB95) — 25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

PAUL’S MESSAGE

Had a Specific Focus

God’s Provision

Paul’s preaching focused upon the kingdom of God (Acts 20:25), also identified as the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 8:3-5, 12; Col. 1:13-14).

Acts 20:25 (NASB95) — 25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

Matthew 16:18-19 (NASB95) — 18 “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. 19 “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.”

Acts 8:3-5 (NASB95) — 3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison. 4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

Acts 8:12 (NASB95) — 12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

Colossians 1:13-14 (NASB95) — 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He faithfully proclaimed the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

Acts 20:24 (NASB95) — 24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as 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.

Man’s Accountability

Paul’s preaching focused upon the necessity of faith and repentance (Acts 20:21).

Acts 20:21 (NASB95) — 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

He reminded brethren of the need for watchfulness (Acts 20:28-30).

Acts 20:28-30 (NASB95) — 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.

Had an Overarching Theme

It was Beneficial

Paul’s message was beneficial: “I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house” (Acts 20:20).

Acts 20:20 (NASB95) — 20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

The Greek word *sumpherō*, here translated “profitable,” means “to bring together, to be profitable” (Thomas 4851a). BDAG say it means “(1) to bring together into a heap, *bring together*; (2) to be advantageous, *help, confer a benefit, be profitable/useful*; (1) impersonally, *something is good* (for someone or something), *something is useful or helpful*; (2) participle, *profitable, etc., what advances your best interests or what is good for you, profit, advantage... A*

common term, both singular and plural, in inscriptions in reference to contributions to the public good by civic-minded persons.”

It was Complete

Paul’s message was complete. He declared the whole counsel/purpose of God (Acts 20:26-27).

Acts 20:26-27 (NASB95) — 26 “Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

Previously, we discussed the meaning of God’s purpose and plans. Here let us focus on the significance of “all.” The Greek words *pas/pasa/pan*, translated “all” or “every,” “(1) pertains to totality with focus on its individual components, *each, every, any*; (2) any entity out of a totality, *any and every, every*; (3) marker of the highest degree of something, *all*; (4) pertains to a high degree of completeness or wholeness, *whole*; (5) everything belonging, in kind, to the class designated by the noun, *every kind of, all sorts of*” (BDAG).

God’s inspired word is complete and all-sufficient (Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Deuteronomy 12:32 (NASB95) — 32 “Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Proverbs 30:5-6 (NASB95) — 5 Every word of God is tested; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. 6 Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NASB95) — 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

It was Cautious

Warning against dangers that would arise from within and without, Paul urged the Ephesian elders to be on guard. Fulfilling their charge to shepherd the flock, they must be strong and courageous; cautious and careful, observant, and perceptive (Acts 20:28-30).

Acts 20:28-30 (NASB95) — 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.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Paul said, “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” (v. 32).

Additionally, he said, “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord” (vv. 33-35).