

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.

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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

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

Man’s Accountability Paul’s preaching focused upon the necessity of faith and repentance (Acts 20:21). He reminded brethren of the need for watchfulness (Acts 20:28-30).

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).

It was Complete Paul’s message was complete. He declared the whole counsel/purpose of God (Acts 20:26-27). God’s inspired word is complete and all-sufficient (Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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).

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).