

# Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders

Acts 20:17-38

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them:

Acts 20:17-18a

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:18b-21

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:22-24

And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Acts 20:25-27

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Acts 20:28-30

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 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.

Acts 20:31-32

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Acts 20:33-35



And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Acts 20:36-38

Peter witnesses to Cornelius (38*)				●										
James, brother of John, martyred (41–44)					■									
Peter rescued from prison, leaves Jerusalem (44)					●									
Paul's second Jerusalem visit (famine relief) (44–47*)						■								
Paul's first missionary journey (46–47)						●								
Peter and Paul at Jerusalem council (48–49*)							●							
Paul's second missionary journey (48/49–51*)								■						
Claudius expels Jews from Rome (49)								●						
Paul's third missionary journey (52–57*)									■					
Paul ministers in Ephesus (52–55)									■					
Claudius dies; Jews allowed back to Rome (54)									●					
Nero's reign (54–68)										■				





elders = overseers = shepherds (pastors) = leaders

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πρεσβύτερος = ἐπισκοπῆς = ποιμαίνω (ποιμήν) = ἡγουμένων

Elders: Acts 20:17; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1

Overseers: Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1; Philippians 1:1

Shepherds (pastors): Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 5:2-4

Leaders: Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24



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Acts 20:18b-21



“Genuine faith demands repentance, and sincere repentance will continue to flow from saving faith.”

David Peterson, 565

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Acts 20:22-24

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

Colossians 1:28-29

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

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Acts 20:28-30

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 4:16

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.

Acts 20:28-30



Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

Psalm 100:3

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Acts 20:28-30

“Each congregation which is brought into existence because of the saving work of Jesus is precious to God and should be so treated by those appointed to be its leaders!”

David Peterson, 569

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Acts 20:28-30

Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.

2 Timothy 2:23-26

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.

2 Timothy 4:1-4

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Acts 20:28-30

“History shows that in every generation it has been all too easy for Christian leaders to attract others to their own way of thinking, to satisfy a deep-seated need for approval or popularity. Pastors need to be realistic about the way sin can manifest itself in distortions of the truth and create destructive divisions among Christians. Paul’s solution was for the elders to watch out for themselves.”

David Peterson, 571



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Acts 20:31-32

“By that word, as they accepted it and obeyed it, they would be built up in faith and love together with their fellow-Christians; by that word, too, they were assured of their inheritance among all the people of God, all whom he had set apart for himself.

In due course Paul, with all the apostles, passed from earthly life; but the teaching which they left behind to be guarded by their successors as a sacred deposit, preserved not only in their memory but eventually in the New Testament scriptures, remains to this day as the word of God's grace. And those are most truly in the apostolic succession who receive this teaching, along with the rest of Holy Writ, as their rule of faith and life."

F. F. Bruce, 394

“This is the God-given ‘word’ by which the church grows in size and maturity and is protected from error and division. It is the message which God uses to convert and to sustain believers until they reach the inheritance which the gospel itself promises. When the gospel is faithfully preached and applied to believers, they are assured of their standing with God in Christ and are encouraged to press on in love, unity, and obedience.”

David Peterson, 572

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Acts 20:36-38



“This emphasis is unpopular today. We are frequently told always to be positive in our teaching, and never negative. But those who say this have either not read the New Testament or, having read it, they disagree with it. For the Lord Jesus and his apostles refuted error themselves and urged us to do the same. One wonders if it is the neglect of this obligation which is a major cause of today’s theological confusion.

If, when false teaching arises, Christian leaders sit idly by and do nothing, or turn tail and flee, they will earn the terrible epithet 'hirelings' who care nothing for Christ's flock. Then too it will be said of believers, as it was of Israel, that 'they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and . . . they became food for all the wild animals.'"

John Stott, 328-329