

Living out our faith Pt 29
Acts 20:13-38

V13-17

- While the others sailed Paul chose to walk the twenty-five miles from Troas to Assos, he had many things on his mind to pray about and think through, therefore walking gave him:
 1. More time with the saints in Troas.
 2. Time alone with the Lord for prayer-meditation- the walk was ten hours or less.
 3. Time to ponder the message he would give to the Ephesians elders.
- Remember Paul was not someone who after evangelizing would leave a person without the necessary tools to grow and mature in their walk with Christ. So, on his way to Jerusalem for Pentecost, since he had missed the Passover, he is revisiting churches that he had previously planted to see how they were doing. Verse 16 - Paul was in a hurry and decided to avoid Ephesus to save time, but he did invite the Ephesians elders to visit him in Miletus about thirty-five miles from Ephesus. Now throughout the Book of Acts I cannot but notice the effective ministering of one to another. I mention this because churches today neglect body ministry, and miss out on the application of **Roman 15:14** – perhaps it's because people don't see the three elements needed to fulfill this task:
 1. Be full of goodness- virtue- moral excellence- live what they claim to believe
 2. Filled with knowledge- when giving counsel it is based upon spiritual wisdom and not a human perspective.
 3. Able to admonish one another- the first two characteristics allow you to perform the last element of body ministry, which is to correct one another through scriptural truths.

V18-24

- Today many desire to go to pastor's conferences believing that attending they will somehow leave different than when they arrived. Attendance alone does not change anyone, the only way we change is when our hearts are open to receive and our ears are attentive to hear, and then we make the choice to apply what we heard immediately to our lives and our circumstances. Paul calls these elders to the island of Miletus for final instruction and encouragement concerning ministry and service. The book of Acts records eight different messages given by the Apostle Paul to various people, but only here do we truly see "Paul the pastor" rather than Paul the evangelist, or Paul the Apologetic. Verse 18 we learn that one of the greatest abilities in the kingdom of God is availability. All these elders had responsibilities, but when Paul called, they came,

and by making the journey it demonstrated that the kingdom of God had priority in their lives.

- **Deuteronomy 20:1-9** – illustrates a powerful example of being available for God’s service.

In this chapter concerning warfare the priest is instructed to tell the people of Israel when you see the enemy more numerous than you, with more weaponry than you, don’t be afraid because the Lord is with you to fight for you and give you the victory. Right after the Word is spoken the captains are told to tell all who had a new house, a vineyard he hasn’t eaten from, a new wife, or fear in his heart, to go home. In other words if you are uncertain such as “I’d like to teach children’s ministry, or, go on a missions trip but I’m climbing the corporate ladder and my job won’t allow for it” or “I’d like to serve more but my wife really needs me, and she doesn’t like me to be away at night or on Saturdays,” or maybe you are just afraid, then you won’t make it on the front line. If you want to be used effectively in ministry these four areas must be committed to the Lord.

1. My material possessions
2. My job or career
3. My family
4. My fears and insecurities

- In verse 18 - 19, Paul states at the beginning of his farewell message to these leaders “you know how I lived”, his moral excellence, how he served the Lord with humility and self-denial. This statement alone would disqualify many pastors as pride and self gratification is the manner of lifestyle today. He also says tears and trials marked his ministry. Today Paul would be told it’s his lack of faith that’s caused these hardships in his life not the Lord. Our God would never want difficulty to be the norm only blessing. Verse 18-19 - gives the manner of his ministry – exemplary, verse 20-21 – gives us the message of his ministry – which should be the testimony of everyone whose leading ministry – that you held back nothing that is spiritually beneficial, from anyone you were privileged to serve, even if it caused them to become upset with you. Paul understood this even when teaching an unpopular message to a hostile crowd knowing it could lead to his imprisonment or death.
- Verse 22 is in line with **2 Corinthians 5:14** – Paul says he was constrained – because Paul was already compelled to glorify God; Verse 19 – says his motive was “to serve the Lord” and he refers to himself on numerous occasions as a bond-servant, so it makes sense for him to say he is bound in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem knowing that more difficulties await him there. Verse 23 – in fact he says the Spirit of God tells him his future and it is filled with chains and difficulties. Now, most of us would pull a Jonah if we heard this prophecy for our lives but not Paul. Verse 24 – none of those things move him or cause him to shy away from

God's will. To Paul, his life was not a great consideration; his ambition was to please the Lord so what if that meant giving his life.

V25-31

- Paul was sure he would never see his beloved Ephesians saints again, but his conscience was clear when leaving them because he had not held anything back that would benefit them as he says – verse 27 – “I have not shunned to declare the whole council of God”. What a testimony for Paul, but also what a responsibility for the Ephesians, this meant they were without excuse. Again, this should be the purpose statement for all churches first, for their sakes, second, for the congregation protection. Since he won't see them again he tells them to pay attention to their own spiritual condition, unless they were living in fellowship with the Lord they could not expect to be spiritual guides in the church. After taking heed to themselves, then they were to protect the flock because God had made them overseers to feed the flock. In the **New Testament** elder, pastor, Bishop, are interchangeable terms to describe the same position. Elder is not chronological years but spiritual maturity, thus elder describes the man; Bishop means overseer, thus Bishop describes the ministry; Pastor means to feeder or shepherd, so pastor describes the method of ministry.
- He gives them reasons why it is important to know the whole council of God. First protection for the flock – people coming disguised as sheep but are really wolves. Second for themselves when pride creeps in and instead of serving the Lord and their manner of ministry being exemplary, or their message being to benefit others – instead they seek to draw people unto themselves. Unfortunately, we see this today as folks see the pastorate as a promotion, and a means to have a following. Verse 31 Paul tells them – I warned you constantly, even with tears for three years he was so broken up that these things would happen, to watch yourselves and others.

V32-38

- All Paul could do now was to commit them to God. He knew ultimately that he could only do so much, and that it was the sufficiency of scripture that would keep the Ephesian church. In closing Paul once again uses his own life and ministry as an example of how to live a God honoring life. If we follow these three things we also will honor God and encourage others:
 1. Not to be motivated by material gain – It was not the hope of financial gain that motivated him in the work of the Lord.
 2. Not to be lazy – He was not a lazy man expecting others to provide what he himself could do.

3. Blessing others – He looked to bless others instead of expecting others to bless him.
- Afterward Paul kneels down with these men whom he loved, disciple, corrected, and challenged and prays for them. What a testimony. Verse 37-38 – there's not a hint of anger or bitterness at what he said, only a heavy heart that the man who had been a father figure to them and such an encouragement for them, they would see his face no more. So, they accompany him as far they could to see him off for the last time.