

Readings

Scripture

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. ¹⁸ And when they came to him, he said to them:

“You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, ¹⁹ serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; ²⁰ how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, ²¹ testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. ²² And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, ²³ except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. ²⁴ 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. ²⁵ And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. ²⁶ Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, ²⁷ for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. ²⁸ 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. ²⁹ I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every 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 coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵ 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.’”

³⁶ And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, ³⁸ 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 20:17-38 (English Standard Version)

Sermon Outline

A Gospel-Shaped Life and Testimony
Acts 20:17-38

The Acts of the Apostles
Stephen Baldwin

Faithful elder-shepherds are given to ensure the faithfulness and fruitfulness of Christ’s church.

If you are, or aspire to be, a faithful elder-shepherd in Christ’s church...

Pay close attention to your life and character. (Acts 20:17-27)

- How Paul lived (not his teaching alone)
 - What Paul taught (not his character alone)
 - Where he is compelled to go as a result
 - Who commands his future
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Pay close attention to your teaching. (Acts 20:28-38)

- How the elders must live (not teaching alone)
 - What the elders must teach (not character alone)
 - How the elders must protect the flock
 - What to emulate as elders
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Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- If you were given the task of giving a biblical charge to a group of elders what would you say?
- What are the two areas that Paul stresses in the life of the Ephesian elders?
- How would you describe Paul’s relationship with the Ephesian elders? Did they trust him? Did he trust them? Was their relationship “formal” (ecclesiastical) or personal?
- Paul anticipated more imprisonment and affliction as he went forward. From this passage what do you observe in Paul’s attitude as he faces that reality? If you knew you were to face affliction, how would you prepare for it now?
- When you read verse 24 how does it speak to your life?
- Paul addresses his words in this section exclusively to the Ephesian elders, with us “listening in”. First, what qualities would have commended the Ephesian elders to be serving as such after only a few years of Paul’s ministry in Ephesus? Read and discuss 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5.