

Paul's Farewell to the Ephesian Elders

Acts 20:13-38, Acts 21:10-14

MAIN IDEAS

Paul stops in Miletus on his way to Jerusalem and sends for the Ephesian Elders.

Paul addresses the Ephesian Elders

- He reminds them of how he lived among them and ministered to them.
- Paul explains that he has been directed by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem and that he expects to be imprisoned, never to see them again.
- Paul warns them of the danger of “wolves” inside the church and reminds them of their responsibility to the flock.
- Paul reminds them of his character as he served them and encourages them to live humbly and generously.
- Paul says his good-byes.
- Agabus, a prophet, confirms what the Holy Spirit had revealed to Paul; that imprisonment awaits him.
- Paul is ready, to not only be imprisoned, but to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

List the ways Paul ministered to the Ephesians in Acts 20:18-21.

What did Paul tell them about his future? (Acts 20:22-27) Paul accepted that his future was unknown (“not knowing what will happen to me there”). Why is this important in ministry?

What do you think Paul meant when he said he did not shrink from declaring anything that was profitable (Acts 20:20), or shrink from declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)? What is the whole counsel of God? What does “shrinking” look like? What is the opposite of shrinking?

Why do you think Paul admonishes the Elders to first pay careful attention to themselves (and possibly one another) and then to the flock?

Who are these wolves and why do we not recognize them right away? Consider Romans 16:17-18, John 10:12, Matthew 7:15, 2 Peter 2, Jude

What is the role of a shepherd/elder? Consider Psalm 23.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

If you, like Paul, were giving a final address, what would you point to in your life that demonstrates what you value most? Does your answer stir up pride or humility?

Without a shepherd to lead, guide, direct and protect, sheep are prone to wander leaving them vulnerable to wolves. What are some reasons you may have for not wanting to place yourself under the authority of an elder? How does your answer align with the gospel?

Contemplate the tender, heart-felt moments between Paul and the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:37-38) and the disciples in Caesarea (Acts 21:13). How is it that Paul was not moved to run from Jerusalem by such overwhelming affection? Place yourself in Paul's situation. Where would your deepest affection lie?

GROUP RESPONSE

Share your failures and your victories in declaring the whole gospel of Christ. Encourage one another to be bold and brave when declaring the truth of God is uncomfortable and seems awkward. Pray that the Lord will fill you and your group with his Spirit as you wisely proclaim Christ.

Discuss the attributes and character qualities of a "wolf." Remember, wolves have selfish motives. They are not those with whom you may have differences but those who seek to divide, mislead and rule over the sheep. They desire to exalt themselves and use the sheep to serve their agenda. Even when they appear to be concerned for the sheep their objectives are self-centered. They may seem very sheep-like but at some point they bear their teeth and bite leaving those who trusted them wounded and confused. Just as bank employees learn to identify counterfeit bills by studying the original, we must be students of Jesus so that we can identify the counterfeits.

REPRODUCE

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always even to the very end of the age.

This discipleship brings us from spiritual infancy to maturity. Making disciples requires personal investment and sacrifice. Paul likens it to parenting in 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8, 1-12. God is calling you to be a disciple and to make disciples. Consider both getting a mentor and becoming a mentor.

KEY VERSES

From the sermon:

- Acts 20:13-38
- Acts 21:10-14

Additional verses from the study

- Romans 16:17-18
- Mathew 7:15
- Jude
- Matthew 28:19-20
- John 10:12
- 2 Peter 2
- Psalm 23
- 1 Thess. 7-8, 11-12