

Text:

Acts 20: 17-33

“Pattern for Church Leadership”

August 10, 2014

Read Text:

The first part of this chapter, which we did not read, traces Paul’s activities after leaving Ephesus, where God had so dramatically demonstrated that Paul came behind none of the other apostles. He had given the Holy Spirit by the laying on of his hands, just as Peter and John had done at Samaria. He had done remarkable miracles, and God had discomfited the sorcerers and left them completely dismantled. Their books were burned and the tumult they had raised against Paul, was put down by the civil authorities, demonstrating that all things were in the hands of the risen Lord in heaven and the way was being smoothed for the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the crooked places were being made straight and the rough places smooth, as the prophets had said.

From Ephesus Paul journeyed through Asia Minor and confirmed the faith of the churches. In Greece he preached long into the night and a young man sitting in a window on the third floor, went to sleep and fell down, and was taken up dead. Paul picked him up and said that his life was still in him, and the young man Eutychus, got up and ate, and Paul went back to preaching and preached until dawn.

Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, but he took a rather circuitous route and decided not to return to Ephesus but to have the elders of the church to come to him at the city of Miletus, just south of Ephesus. This they did and Paul had a famous meeting with them there. This meeting is important, because of the brief account that is given of Paul’s charge to them. There are at least three things important for those who would lead the Lord’s Church.

I. The dedication: The example of Paul Himself. Offering up of Self to Christ. II. The activity: Shepherding God’s Flock; III. The Substance: The word of Grace.

- I. Paul: The dedication: vs. 17-27 The offering up of himself to God. “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.” (Php 2:17 AV)
- A. Paul’s manner: humility of mind.
 - B. Tears and trials
 - C. Helpful in his teaching; not erudite blatherings, but practical godliness.
 - D. Publicly and from house to house; open and transparent; not twofaced.
 - E. A message toward God: repentance [think afterwards]; a message toward Jesus: faith. Faith and repentance are not the same thing, but they cannot be separated, for they are in spiritual union. As the hand to the wrist.
 - F. He did not count his life dear: he was willing to spend it in the service of the church. Vs. 24
 - G. Innocent of the blood of all men; why? He had proclaimed the whole counsel of God.

II. The Elders: Shepherding the flock. 28-30

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- A. Take Heed to Yourselves You have to deal with the beam in your own eye. Spiritual preparation. Spiritual pride and the love for ascendancy is the common failing of elders in their work.
- B. Take heed to the flock: hold them dear to you. Be near to them
- C. They were commissioned to take care of the flock to which they were bound.
- D. They had been appointed by the Holy Ghost, by prayer and the laying on of hands.
- E. They were honored to be overseers and feeders of the flock
- F. Christ had purchased the church by his own blood.
- G. A man has no right to define the office for himself; God has defined it. Elders are bound.
- H. Although chosen by men, elders serve the Lord in their office, and in serving the Lord, they serve the people.

III. The word of grace. Vs. 31-38

- A. Evil men would subvert the grace of God: vs. Do you think you will have no opposition to the preaching of the grace of God which delivers men from captivity to the devil; will he let his captives go without a struggle?
- B. It is the grace of God upon which the church is build.
- C. The church is corrupted from without, and from within. See Jude 3ff.
- D. Paul had labored and fulfilled his ministry, now he commends them to God and the word of his grace. It was time now for them to grow up for this was the last time he would see them.
- E. But they were not left alone; they had the same thing that the church had after Jesus went to heaven: they had the word of God and the Spirit of God. They would be all right.
- F. But they must beware of covetousness [idolatry]: 33-34 How treacherous is the love of the world.

Application to the Congregation of the Lord.

- A. Pray for those who have the rule over you. They watch for your souls.
- B. Pray earnestly that God would give you good leaders
- C. Esteem them very highly. Place a great value upon them.
- D. Salute them and give them public recognition.
- E. This will be good for you. Heb 13: 17 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.