

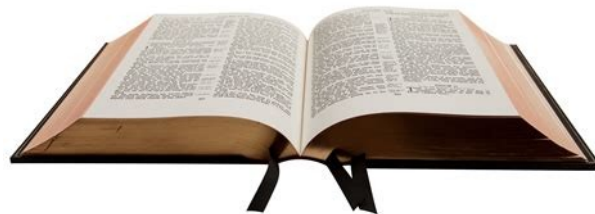
Paul's Farewell Address to the Ephesian Elders.

Acts 20:17- 38



From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. When they arrived, he said to them.. "You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.



From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church.



Paul had something important to say – the 36 mile journey to call the leaders and then for them to come would have involved a wait of a few days.

This was to be a final message to the church leaders by Paul in person.

It gives us the only speech by Paul in Acts that is addressed directly to Christians.

When they arrived, he said to them..
"You know how I lived the whole time I was with you,
from the first day I came into the province of Asia.



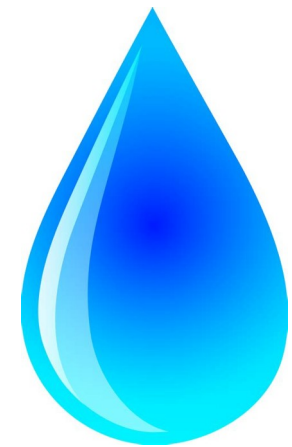
By asking the leaders to remember his time with them, Paul uses his personal testimony – a life example – in order to show the leaders a model for their ministries.

I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews.



He was not boasting of great personal achievements ie extra-ordinary miracles etc.

– it was as the Lord's servant he ministered.
He also showed perseverance in the 'severe' trials that he suffered.



You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.



He was not afraid to tell it straight – both publicly and personally. A preacher must not avoid giving the difficult parts of God's word. The early churches, not having special buildings worshipped in house churches.

I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.



It was the same message for all
turn and trust

Notice the word **MUST**
– it isn't a suggestion!

And now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem,
not knowing what will happen to me there.



He felt a deep sense of the
necessity to go to Jerusalem
– the lion’s den - with an
uncertain outcome.

In some ways this parallels our Lord’s final journey up to Jerusalem.

I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.



It was the way - it was in God's purposes for Paul.

– The Holy Spirit warned Paul so that he would be prepared, and He assured him that he was loved and was doing the right thing.

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race (with joy) and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.



It's not about me - I want to do a good job for the Lord – Paul's God given task was about grace and by grace !

A Bombshell

Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again.



He had a prophetic sense that this was the last time till the glory

Therefore, I declare to you today
that I am innocent of the blood of all men.



I have told you the whole truth - ... cf. Ezekiel. He would not be called to answer that somebody died in their sin because he didn't do what he should. He had not preached to every single person but provided opportunities to hear the gospel and laid down the true teachings that the leaders were to preach.

For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

He had not held back from fear, embarrassment, misplaced kindness etc, but he told it as it is.



Now this is the application to you

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.



Maintain your own personal testimony – it has to be a personal life example.

The Holy Spirit had anointed and appointed them to be –
overseers = { bishops - elders - pastors }
And THEN care for the flock.

Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

This was to be their responsibility as under-shepherds. They must remember it is God's church – not theirs. The 'sheep' have been bought by the Saviour's blood.

Notice the striking combination of the words "his own blood"



I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock.



Paul predicts that great danger was coming :
from attack harming the church from **OUTSIDE**
cf. government spies, general persecutions,

Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.



There would be great danger from attack:

DAMAGING the church from **INSIDE** (dangerous deception)
eg. self-seeking apostates posing as 'apostles', prophets etc.
ie. personal kingdom-builders.

So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.



Your best defence is to watch and pray,
being grounded in God's word.

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace,
which can build you up and give you an inheritance among
all those who are sanctified.



By depending on God's grace and power,
you will not only survive but GROW and ultimately INHERIT.
But notice that the inheritance is for those who are sanctified.

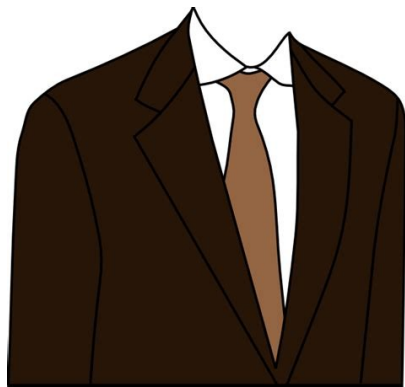
I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.

Paul gives more personal testimony as an example for them



I wasn't doing it for what I could get.

What was Paul's real motivation?



Luke 12:15 And Jesus said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.

He was not afraid of hard work! He supported himself (for strategic reasons) and had something to spare for others.



In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak,

He shows that the objective of his personal example was for the benefit of others – especially the weak.

Do as I do and as I say. Who are the weak? How can we help?



... remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said..
`It is more blessed to give than to receive.`



These are some of the precious words of Jesus not recorded in the Gospels. Paul may have heard it from the other apostles.
cf. John 21:25

When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.



Kneeling was an attitude of humility and dependence on God. We are not told what he prayed. It was between them and God.

They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.



Do you see Paul as a lovable Pastor?

If you had met him you would.

It was good to physically express genuine affection!

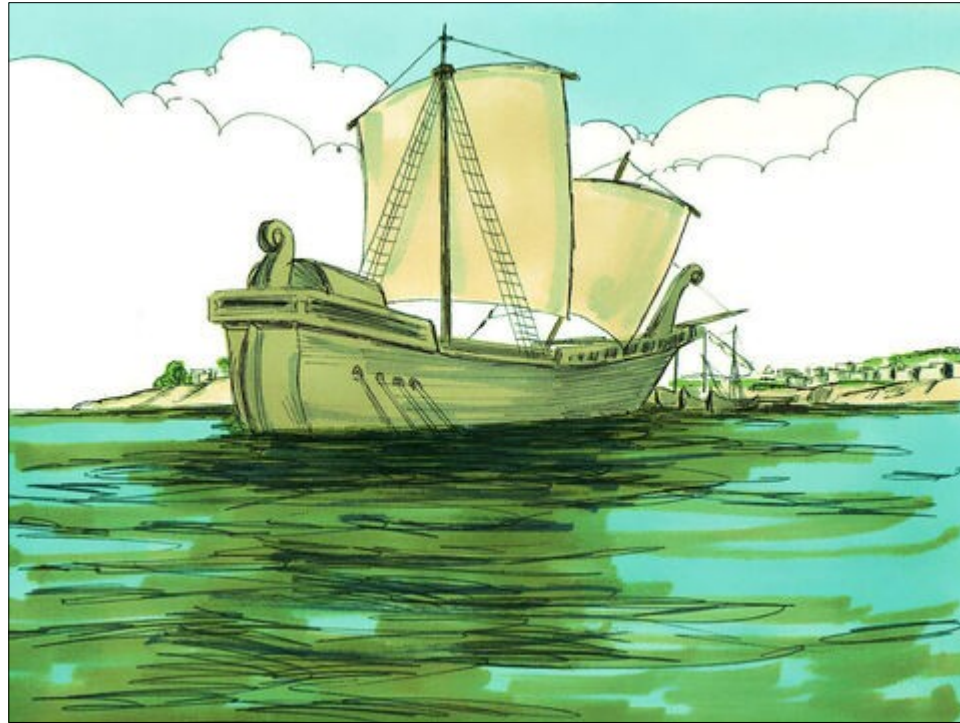
What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again.



This was a very real last goodbye.

They too sensed the finality of the occasion.

Then they accompanied him to the ship.



They wanted to be with him for as long as they could be.

It was a sad parting – they had formed true and deep friendships – We do not grieve as those who have no hope.

In writing to his younger colleague Timothy who later ministered in Ephesus, Paul again warns about the 'wolves' that had arrived. He even names Hymenaeus and Alexander as examples in 1 Timothy 1:20. Discernment is important, as is love.

The Lord Jesus speaks some years later to the Ephesian leadership in the letter in Revelation 2:1-6.

We have to keep the important balance : discernment and love



Paul wanted to give guidance to the leaders



But there's a message for us all.

Ephesians 4:11-12 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Ephesians 5:1-8 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person--such a person is an idolater--has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Therefore do not be partners with them. For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light