

Series: "Finishing What was Started"

C.R. 2-18-24

"Parting Words"

**Text:** Acts 20: 25-32

**Intro:** We have been in this chapter now for a few weeks, but it is just to good to plow through swiftly. Paul has been setting the stage for leaving Ephesus, but is spending some very quality time with the Elders before he leaves. The things that he says to them should not be taken lightly, because they still stand true today.

Let's take a look again at the Elders meeting in Ephesus. A day that would leave them filled with emotions.

**1) A Sad Observation (v.25)**

- a. Paul is not guessing about this, he uses the words "I Know".
- b. What a shock this must have been for the men around him. They would never see his face again.
- c. In all of this, Paul's great love and concern for the leaders and the congregation in Ephesus was simply a reflection of Jesus' great love and concern for them. Paul followed Jesus in every way he could; since Jesus loved these believers so much, so did Paul.

**2) Serious Declarations (v.26-30)**

- a. As if he were giving witness in a court of law, Paul declared that his heart was clear. He could leave these Christians to God's care with a good conscience, knowing that he had not shunned to declare to [them] the whole counsel of God.
- b. I had to write in my Bible hear "Am I". Am I innocent.
- c. How many could stand in this room today and declare that my conscience is clear. I have done my job to the best of ability.
- d. Acts 19:9-10 tells us that Paul taught the Ephesians and those in the region for more than two years, using a rented room from the school of Tyrannus. There are some indications that Paul taught

for several hours a day, and some six days a week. This means hundreds of hours of teaching time (probably well more than 1,500 hours).

- e. **Guzik:** *Many preachers today simply use a Bible text as a launching pad, and then go on to say what they want — what the people want to hear. Others throw in Bible quotations to illustrate their points, or to illustrate their stories. Yet the real calling of a preacher is to simply let the Bible speak for itself and let it declare its own power.*
- f. Paul then reminds them of the task they have been called to do.
- g. “Pay attention to the people of God. Love them, look over them, care for them.
- h. Paul is telling them to be Pastors.
- i. You shepherd by feeding the flock. *The first idea behind being a shepherd is feeding God’s people. “They are to be shepherds of God’s church, poimanino meaning in general to tend a flock and in particular to lead a flock to pasture and so to feed it. This is the first duty of shepherds.” (Stott)*
- j. First you feed, and then you lead. Lead them to where God wants them.
- k. Then remember whose it is. It was purchased with the blood of Jesus.
- l. The sheep need to remember that God has appointed shepherds to feed and lead them.
- m. The shepherds need to remember that the flock belongs to God, and not to them.
- n. Paul then tells them that the battle is coming from without and from within.
- o. *Ill. A pastor came home one day to the sound of arguing coming from the bedroom. He quickly climbed the stairs and entered his little daughter’s room and found her arguing with her friends. “What’s going on in here?”, he asked. His five year old daughter looked up at him and smiled as she said, “It’s OK Daddy, We’re just playing church!” That scene would be truly funny if it weren’t true! Because, sadly, this is common practice in many churches!)*
- p. *(Ill. While the church is attacked from without and from within, we will survive the outward attacks far more readily than we will the inward ones. When the house is divided, it will not stand - Matt. 12:25. Ill. 1 Cor. 1:10 - Divisions = “Schisma” This word literally means to cleave and carries with it the idea of butchery. When there*

*is division among the members of the Lord's church, there is a butchery of the Lamb of God taking place!)*

- q. I heard of one church in the mountains that literally split over the color of the song books. The side who lost the vote took chainsaws and sawed the little one room church in two and carried their side away. What a testimony to the glory of God!
- r. Imagine how these men listening to Paul would have received this. It would be hard to believe, and like the disciples with Jesus, many of them would say, "Not me, Lord!"
- s. To draw away the disciples after themselves: This is their motivation — they wanted a following. Ego can make people do things that they never thought they would do.
- t. (Ill. What is sad is the fact that anyone of us is only one step away from being the spark the devil uses to blow the church apart. Anyone in this building who refuses to walk in humble submission before the Lord is capable of being used by the enemy to destroy this fellowship. Don't let it be you! Search your heart and see if there is the beginning of that spirit of divisiveness that can do so much harm. May I remind you that the closer you get to Jesus, the less likely it is that you will be the center of trouble?)

### **3) A Strong Recommendation (v.31-32)**

- a. Programs can't do it; the spirit of the age can't do it; slick marketing can't do it; entertainment can't do it; only God and the word of His grace can build you up and give you an inheritance in heaven.
- b. You see, our churches can be one of two places. They can be places where the Spirit of God manifests Himself in power and where there is unity and love among the brethren, or they can be places of strife, conflict and division. God can bless the first church, He can do nothing for the second variety, unless they are willing to change.