

Paul loved the saints at the church of Ephesus and even though he didn't have time to revisit them, he wanted to see them one last time and give them some final words of encouragement. He urged them to remain faithful to the Lord and warned of those who would try to lead them astray with a perverted gospel. He also reminded them of how he had faithfully ministered the word of God to them without expecting anything in return.

Verses 1-26: After the uproar in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-41), Paul began to follow his plan to travel through Macedonia and Achaia before heading to Jerusalem and then Rome (Acts 19:21). After visiting churches in Achaia and Macedonia, he sails across the Aegean Sea back to Troas, where he spends a week. While there, Paul preaches late into the night one evening in a third-floor room where a young man (the Greek word suggests a youth between 7 and 14) named Eutychus fell asleep and fell out of a window to his death. However, God enabled Paul to raise the young man from the dead, to the relief of all the brethren. Leaving Troas, Paul then traveled to Assos and then to Miletus, purposely passing by Ephesus because he wanted to arrive at Jerusalem by Pentecost. However, Paul called for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus in order to speak to them in a farewell address. He begins by reminding them of his faithfulness in ministering the gospel to them while he had been with them. He also declared his intention to return to Jerusalem despite the warnings of the troubles that awaited him because of the gospel of Christ. However, these warnings would not deter him from declaring the complete gospel of Jesus Christ and he would continue to be as faithful as he was when he preached the gospel among the Ephesians.

27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

We join Paul's address already in progress in this verse because in the previous verse Paul declares that he is innocent of "the blood of all men." Paul states that he cannot be held responsible for not telling everyone he could about the gospel of Jesus Christ and this verse gives the reason. The Greek word translated "shunned" means "to withdraw from fear." Paul did not withhold from the Ephesians anything that God had revealed to him. Instead, he boldly taught the complete truth of God's word to the Ephesians so that they may have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

"Take heed [to be attentive; to devote oneself to] therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers" – Paul is speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus (v. 17) and the Holy Spirit is now giving them the responsibility of watching over the believers in the Ephesian church. As overseers, they had the responsibility of keeping themselves faithful to the Lord as well as teaching and leading the flock to do likewise.

"to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" – As overseers, these elders also had the responsibility of "feeding the church of God" much like a shepherd who cares for the sheep in his charge. Paul describes the church of God as being purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ, which indicates the magnitude of Christ's love for the church in being willing to shed His own blood for it. Being overseers is not a trivial responsibility because God has placed those He loves so much under the care of these elders. This statement also declares Jesus, the One who purchased the church with His own blood, to be God.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

"For I know this" – The reason Paul is stressing the importance that the elders keep watch is because he knew what would eventually happen. He knew this because of one or more of the following: 1) revelation from God; 2) past experience; 3) knowing man's sinful nature; 4) knowing Satan's methods.

"that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" – Paul's teaching and oversight had kept the Ephesian church faithful to the gospel, but once he was gone, false teachers described as "grievous wolves" would come in to take advantage of the flock. In contrast to elders, who sought after the welfare of the church, these false teachers would, like wolves entering a flock of sheep, seek to satisfy their own desires at the expense of the flock.

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things [distorted; twisted], to draw away disciples after them" – The threats to the church would not only be external but also internal. False teachers from within their own ranks would begin to distort the truth of the gospel in order to convince people to follow them. These false teachers take advantage of the trust and familiarity they have within the church to push their distortions of the gospel. We should always remember that the message is more important than the messenger and if the message is not right, then we cannot accept it even if we like and/or trust the messenger.

31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

"Therefore watch [to stay awake; be on guard]" – Knowing that dangers will inevitably arise from both outside and inside the church, they are to be watchful and ready to address these issues when they do arise in order to protect the flock.

"and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" – Paul was in Ephesus for a period of three years. He apparently ministered for about a year before he left the synagogue and began teaching in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). During the entire three years, however, Paul warned the Ephesian believers of the dangers from false teachers who would distort and twist the gospel for their own ends. Paul's tears indicates the love that he had for the Ephesian church and the emphasis he put on the warnings.

32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

“And now, brethren, I commend [entrust] you to God” – Paul would no longer be able to remain with them to teach them and keep them safe from being led astray. He now entrusts them to the care of God. We should disciple new converts and teach them as much as we can but eventually they will have to develop their own personal relationship with God and look to Him for their guidance instead of on man. Paul is trusting that God will help the Ephesian church remain faithful to the truth of His word.

“and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up” – Paul is also entrusting the Ephesian church to the word of God, which God gave in order to “build you up.” The Bible is our source of spiritual growth and the anchor that prevents us from being tossed about by “every wind of doctrine” (**Eph. 4:14** “*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*”). **2 Tim. 3:16-17** “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.*”

“and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified [set apart in dedication to God]” – The “sanctified” are the saints whom God has set apart for Himself. They have an inheritance consisting of all the things that God has promised us through Jesus Christ (eternal life, being with Him forever, etc.). These things only become possible because God gave us His word so that we could hear the gospel and believe and thus become children of God (**Rom. 10:17** “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*”).

33 I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

“I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel” – In contrast to the false teachers who would later come in, Paul’s motive was not financial gain at the expense of the Ephesians. He spent those three years in Ephesus ministering to the Ephesians in order to benefit them – not himself. He wanted them to believe and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities” – Throughout the three years that he was ministering in Ephesus, Paul did not expect the Ephesians to support him. Instead, he worked with his own hands (“these hands”) to supply his needs for food, shelter, clothing, etc. The Ephesians themselves were witnesses to this fact.

“and to them that were with me” – Paul worked, not only to support himself, but to help support those that ministered along with him (Timothy, Silas, Luke and others). He did not want to be a financial burden on those to which he and his companions were ministering so that it would not become a hindrance to the spread of the gospel or to the spiritual growth of the believers.

35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring [to feel fatigue from working] ye ought to support the weak [weak from sickness or injury]” – Paul did all these things (supporting himself and others while ministering the gospel) in order to be an example to the Ephesians. Paul wanted them to labor in the same way that he did in order to help others who are “weak” (physically or spiritually).

“and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” – None of the gospels record this statement of Jesus, although it’s possible that Paul may be alluding to **Luke 6:38**: “*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*” Alternatively, Paul may be referring to another record of Jesus’ statement that is not one of the four gospels in the Bible. Luke referred to many other writers and witnesses of Jesus in his gospel (Luke 1:1-2). Paul wants the Ephesians to remember that Jesus taught that God blesses those that give and that blessing far outweighs whatever they may have given up by giving to others. God’s blessing may not be material and it may not arrive during our lifetime. The blessing may come later in heaven when God rewards us for loving others more than ourselves.

36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.

When Paul finished addressing the Ephesian elders, he knelt and prayed with them. He no doubt prayed that God would watch over them and protect them from the false teachers that would come. He likely asked God to bless them and help them remain faithful.

37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

“And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him” – It’s obvious that these Ephesians loved Paul and it broke their heart to see him leave.

“Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more” – Saying goodbye to Paul would not have been so painful if they had the hope that he would return to see them again. However, Paul had said that they would never see him again (v. 25). Paul felt compelled to go to Jerusalem despite the warnings of bonds and afflictions (v. 22-24). Even though he didn’t know what was going to happen, he believed that he would never be able to return to Ephesus to see these elders again. The prospect of never seeing Paul again broke the hearts of these Ephesian elders.

“And they accompanied him unto the ship” – The elders wanted to be with Paul as long as possible, so they went with him as he traveled from the place where he had met with them to the boat on which he would sail to his next stop toward Jerusalem.