

AM Acts 20:17-38 Paul's farewell to the Ephesian Elders

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Preacher: Rev Kenny Macleod

[0 : 00] Good morning, and from behind the screen, welcome you to our service this morning. I am Kenny MacLeod, I'm the Minister in Downvale in Glatton-Partick in Glasgow, and the Presbytery of Glasgow and Argyle has appointed me to be your inter-moderator, so I'm pleased to be here with you this morning, and obviously the reason for being here today is because we have the responsibility of the Presbytery to have the congregation formally declared vacant, so that is what we're doing today.

Please don't be downcast about that, I'm sure you're going to miss your minister, but the Lord Jesus hasn't left, and he's to be with us in worship, and as always to him that we look to in regards to our present and the future, and who best to leave the church's needs and what we have to leave them in his hands.

And thankfully we can do that in prayer, so please be encouraged by that. We give you a warm welcome to our service this morning, and obviously we do have social distancing, which is where we live and the days we're in, so we do pray that in God's grace that we will be protected.

Just to say the evening service this evening will be led by the Reverend Robert Dale. Thank you. We are thankful for his ministry amongst us here. Wednesday at 7pm is the monthly missionary prayer meeting in the Lord Hall, and this will be led by David Kenyon.

And following on from the annual congregational meeting which we had last Wednesday evening, an original signed copy is now available for inspection on the side table as you go out, so you're more than welcome to have a look at that.

[1 : 54] Next Lord's Day, the services will be taken by Mr. Alan Thompson. Alan attends our congregation in Downvale. So we pray that as we come together that God himself will reveal himself to us as we come to worship him.

We begin, obviously we're not allowed to sing, but we've come to worship God. We're going to listen to Psalm 1a, as William has arranged for this to be played.

Psalm 1a, verses 1-6. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock.

To God's praise. Blessed is the one who turns away from where the wicked walk, who does not stand in sinners' paths, or sit with those who mock.

Instead he finds God's holy love, His joy and great delight.

[3 : 19] He makes the presence of the Lord, Lord is sunny day and night.

He prospers ever like a tree that's planted by our sin, And in Jesus' season yields its fruit, His feet are always green.

Not so the wicked, they are like a child that's flown away.

They will not stand when judgment comes, For with the righteous say.

It is the Lord who sees and knows the way the righteous go.

[4 : 54] Well, as the way of wicked death, the Lord will overthrow.

Let us come before the Lord in prayer. Let us pray. Lord, as we come into your presence this morning in public worship, We do pray as we come that we are aware of whose presence we are in.

The God who is high and lifted up. The God who is holy. But Lord, you have given us the opportunity and the way of coming. We come in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank you for the way, the fact that the way is open for us, As we know by His finished work on the cross of Calvary. And what all that teaches us in regards to Christ's coming to die for sinners.

And for us, Lord, to repent of our sins, To come and ask for forgiveness. This being the gospel message. And today, Lord, we rejoice in it.

[6 : 06] We thank you that you are the God of our salvation. But Lord, in the fact that we are able to draw near to you, We rejoice in that very news, the good news of the gospel.

That we can come to God. That we can repent of our sins. And that we can ask for your salvation, Which you freely give us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is God's gift to us. And today we rejoice in the fact for those who have trusted in you. And the Lord called you our heavenly Father. What a privilege to think of the God who has created all things.

As we see the splendor and the beauty of what we see around us. Even driving here this morning. And to see it in all its beauty in the sunshine. We thank you, Lord, for it.

And what it's been in its history. As we think. As Norman's saying. In regards to churches here. During a revival in the 19th century. Where people here coming to faith.

[7 : 05] And many of them. And Lord, how we would love for these days to return. We would ask that you would, Lord. That the revival begins in the very house of God.

In our hearts. So we pray as we draw near to you today. That you would move our hearts. And to think so that we may grow. That our desire would be as Paul desired.

That I may know him. And that is knowing Jesus. And to get to know him better. And by doing so, Lord. So, Lord. This would be the means of driving us to the throne of grace.

To think of others who do not have what we do. The precious gift of your salvation. And that this would be our desire. That others would know it. And come to know Jesus too.

Because of its importance in regards to time. And eternity. For us, Lord. To live for Christ. For me to live as Christ. And to die as gain. The Apostle Paul said.

[8 : 02] And that that would be true of us as well. As we think of your great gospel. And what it means. So bless us then today. As we think. As we, Lord. Are coming to make the congregation vacant.

As required by Presbytery. Lord, you know what that means. We don't know what the future holds. But you do. And we would love to think that there is a future here.

For the free church in Dumfries. The future is your people. The future is for more to come in. Through the preaching of the word. And the future is to go forward.

And having the commission of Jesus Christ. To go into the world. Making disciples in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And having the promise that.

Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age. So, Lord. Today then. Revive our hearts. Help us to be strengthened and encouraged in the gospel.

[8 : 59] In the gospel. Although the numbers are few. Lord. When the gospel began. As we think. In your own ministry. When you came to choose people. To lead the church.

We thank you, Lord. That the importance of it. Was that you spent the evening in prayer. Over before choosing men. To be your disciples. And we are also conscious, Lord.

That we need leaders for the church here. And help us to bring this to the throne of grace. And to bring it to yourself. So that you would guide us as well. To have leaders.

And for people to take the gospel forward. In this place. We ask for your grace and mercy. Thank you for families being here. And children. We pray, Lord.

That you would bless them. We thank you that they are blessed. To be given to a Christian parents. And knowing that even the children in the womb are prayed for.

[9 : 55] And what a privilege that is. Even in our day. And thinking of them growing up. Being brought to. Among other Christians. To worship God. And we pray that the influence of their young years.

That they would see the importance of the gospel. And that their parents would be encouraged. In that same gospel. So, Lord bless us. We think of those who are not able to be with us today.

Who are old and infirm. We think of those in homes or whatever. Care homes. And we do think on these days of COVID-19. Where our lives are so uncertain.

But we do pray for your protection. Lord, we thank you for the security. Whatever happens for those who are in Christ Jesus. That we can look to him. The author and finisher of our faith.

So, bless then our worship today. That you would make yourself known to us. And that you would speak to our hearts. As we, Lord, seek you now. We ask all of this in Jesus name.

[10 : 56] Amen. Amen. So, there's two boys. I know it's coming in. Is it Samuel? Yeah. Samuel and Thomas. Yeah. And there's a wee girl.

What's her name? Eleanor. Eleanor. So, that's a lovely name. We've got a niece called Eleanor too. So, good morning. And it's lovely to see you both. Right. I'm going to do something here.

To see if you recognize what it is. Okay. A bird. It's a bird. Yeah. It is. Does anyone know what kind of bird that?

I don't know if you get these birds in them face. I'm going to... Well, this is a bird. Yes. You do. Okay.

So, this is my special bird. You've probably seen my bird on the screen. It is. Does anyone know what it is? No. Young and old. Does anyone guess what this is?

[11 : 53] It's a bird. It's a bird. Yeah. Definitely a bird. This is... Maybe you have to be from the seaside where I come from. You have to recognize one of these.

This is an oyster catcher. It's an oyster catcher. Do you have them in Dimfries? Yes. Yeah. Good. Excellent. This might not look like, but it is meant to be.

And this is my oyster catcher. It's my favorite. And this is... I've got a wee name for a pet name, but it's called... Albert. Okay. Samuel, this is Albert. You were saying, yeah, it's a bird.

Well, this is Albert. This is a wee pet name I've got for him. So, I've written down a few facts about the bird. It's so good in the car coming down to... That's after a journey, an hour and a half.

What I read about them... Okay. Now, this is a huge, huge number, but for the adults, there are 110,000 pairs of oyster catchers in England.

[12 : 53] There's a huge decline here in Scotland for some reason, and they're not sure why. You'll find them on the estuary, so you'll find them on the Solway, I'm sure.

But they're also starting to move inland. When we go up to Emmerness, our family live up in Emmerness, and we see them on the roundabout at Perth. And they're going about like that, pecking in the ground, looking for their food.

What they usually eat now is not oysters. Oysters are hard to find. But they look for cockles and mussels. And they've got these long bills.

And I was thinking, mussels are really hard to open. But they manage to get their beaks in a wee corner, and they open the mussels like that to eat the mussels. So that is what their bills is really important.

But the amazing thing is this, and I was so chuffed to hear about this, that they live up to 40 years. So our bird's going to be around probably a lot longer than I am, because 40 years.

[13 : 57] So that is, how can they live so long? And I thought, it's so dangerous out there. And I thought, it must be because God, obviously, is looking after them. How do we identify them?

Well, they've got a red beak. They've also got, I don't know, our bird doesn't show his legs. He's quite shy. So they've got orange and red legs as well. And they've got this V arrangement on their backs where you see them flying.

So they are absolutely beautiful. But you actually hear them before you see them. You heard this one before you saw it, didn't you? You hear them.

And you know, when I thought about that, thinking about birds, you know, Matthew chapter 10, verse 29 tells us that God knows everything about everything.

He knows all about birds as well. He spoke, and Jesus said that even if a sparrow falls to the ground, one sparrow, God knows about it.

[14 : 58] Because God cares even for the animals. But you know, it says, it goes on to say this. How much more does God care for us than the animals?

So that is so important for us to know today, how much God loves us and cares for us. So we're thankful to God for his care over us. In fact, God gave us his son to die for our sins.

And we're so thankful today as we come to worship him that he's done that. So will you please look out for oyster catchers. So the next time I see you, Samuel and Thomas, I'll be asking Eleanor.

Just keep on sleeping. That's lovely. So I'll be asking you. Okay, so look out for oyster catchers. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Eternal Father, we are so thankful for your care and your keeping.

As we spoke about a creation and all its wonder, we think of the animals as we saw today. Cows and sheep and the animals round about and birds coming here.

[16 : 05] We do thank you for your care. They don't have barns to fill in like we do. But yet the God of heaven looks after them and feeds them and cares for them.

And Lord, how much more then do you look after us and your care of us. And when we think of the gospel that you came to save us. Oh Lord, we rejoice in that.

Because if it was just Calvary alone, that would be more than enough for God to do for us. But Lord, you do more than that. In each day we rise, we see your goodness and all that your care has done for us over the years.

So bless us then today and help us to have hearts of thankfulness in God's presence. And giving you thanks for your goodness. Bless us in Jesus. Amen. So we're now going to read God's word.

And today we're going to read in Acts chapter 20 and reading from verse 17. Acts chapter 20 and reading from verse 17.

[17 : 10] Here we see Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders. Paul wanted to meet with them because he was not going to see them again. But he was wanting to encourage them in the work of the gospel as he himself speaks about his own work as well.

So reading Acts chapter 20 from verse 17. Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility, with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

How I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable and teaching you in public, and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now behold, I am going to Jerusalem constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me.

But I do not account my life of any value, nor as precious to myself. If only I may finish my course in the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

[18 : 39] And now behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

I know that after my departure, fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock, and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things to draw away the disciples after them.

Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish everyone with tears. And now I commend to you God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities. As to those who were with me and to those who are with me.

[19 : 57] In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all. They embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again.

And they accompanied him to the ship. Amen. And may God bless to us the reading of his own holy word. Well, we're now going to listen to the words of Psalm 15 again in the St. Sam's version.

And this speaks very much of someone who is a child of grace and someone who watches over his own life in the presence of God and obviously in the presence of others.

It says, Lord, who may stay within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon your holy hill may live before your face. Whoever walks a blameless life, who acts in righteousness, and who will always from the heart sincerely truth express.

[21 : 19] What a great testimony of someone who is a leader in the church of the Lord Jesus, that we ought to look to God and obviously careful about our own lives as well.

We listen to the words of this Psalm to God's praise. Lord, who may stay within your tent, your sacred dwelling place, and who upon your holy hill may live before your face.

Who never walks a blameless life, who has saved righteousness, and who will always from the heart sincerely truth express.

He has no sight on anyone, nor does his neighbor wrong.

He has no sight within his heart, nor slander on his tongue.

[22 : 57] He honors those who hear the Lord the worthless in disguise.

He keeps the old fridge he has born, however high the price.

He spends his money at no charge, nor right can he endure.

Those who begin in life like this will always stand seior.

Amen. Well, if you'd like to turn back to the portion of scripture we read in Acts and chapter 20, and looking at the words that we have in that passage today for ourselves, and just in regards to, I think it's quite fitting, for a congregation that's being proclaimed vacant, and also in regards to our future we're looking to appoint elders in the church.

[24 : 23] And it's a great privilege to think that you do have within your membership men that can be chosen for the eldership. There's many congregations that we have in Scotland nowadays, and we're having to use assessor elders, that's elders coming from other congregations to help out because there's not enough.

But you don't have that problem here for choosing men for the position of eldership. So that is a blessing in itself. Turning to the passage, we've seen here that this is Paul's farewell to the church in Ephesus, and he wanted the elders to come to meet with him.

He was wanting, he was on a journey, and he's going back to Jerusalem. He was hoping to get back to Jerusalem before Pentecost, but he didn't have time to stop off in Ephesus, so he stopped on the coast.

He was on a passenger or a merchant ship which made its way down the Aegean Sea, that is between Greece as we know it today, and Turkey on the other side.

And these ships, they used to stop at several trade points on the way, and one of these places was Miletus. This was something like 25 or 30 miles away from Ephesus.

[25 : 44] Now, the passage here provides for us one of the great farewells of the Bible. There are a few, like the ones of, as we think in the Old Testament, there was Jacob and his sons, and how he left a blessing for them.

There was the farewell of Moses and Joshua. There was the farewell of Jonathan and David. And of course, there was the farewell of Jesus at his ascension, as he took them out to Bethany, as the disciples saw them, see him being taken up into glory.

So, it is always a poignant situation, really, saying farewell. I remember in our context in the islands, most of the folk had to leave home and come to the cities to find work or to go to universities.

So, it was always the norm, unless someone had a job at home at fishing or trade or whatever. The norm was simply to leave. And you can imagine, in those days it was 16 or even some at 14 leaving.

Nowadays, it's more like 18 when they leave home. And it's never easy when it comes, when the children leave the nest and they're having to go. And I'm quite sure that folk in Dumfries too will be used to that situation where families are having to go elsewhere.

[27 : 03] But what we have Paul saying here, and what makes it easy for the Apostle Paul in what he was called to do, he was called to serve the Lord.

We see that in verse 19, serving the Lord with all humility. So, if he's doing this in a humble manner, then he'd be willing to do whatever the Lord wanted him to do.

Something similar to Philip when he was in Samaria. Remember, there was a revival going on in Samaria. And Philip was right in the middle of that revival. And remember, God wanted him to go and meet the Ethiopian eunuch.

To meet one person. So, he took him from a place where there was a revival and loads going on. To a place where there was only one person to be brought to Christ.

And God saw the importance of that. And he used the man Philip to do it. And Paul was a similar person. Because he saw himself as a bond servant.

[28 : 07] That simply means he belonged to Christ. He didn't belong to himself. He was willing to go anywhere for the Lord Jesus Christ. And first and foremost, what Paul did was he served Christ.

Secondly, if you can split the two, it was this. Secondly, he served the church. But first, he served Christ. You see, that is what it's like for the Christian.

In whatever role we've got in life. First and foremost, Christ wants you for himself. And that is the way we ought to see it too.

It is this personal relationship with Jesus that is so important. Christ first and then the church. That is the way it was with Paul.

With Paul. That I may know him. That was always his mandate. Wanting to know the Lord Jesus. But things flow from that.

[29 : 07] You see, this was foremost in his life. But what flows from that is the care of Christ's church and its people. And its love for that church. Remember, Jesus himself gave us an example of that in John chapter 13.

Remember, the disciples were discussing. They had just previously been discussing among themselves which one of us is the greatest. And here they come and no one was about to wash feet.

Well, if they're discussing who's the greatest, one thing should. I'm not going to wash feet. But what did Jesus do? He got the bowl. He put a cover over him.

He went down on his knees and he showed us the example of how to be a servant in the church of Christ. We ought to serve out of love. The love for the Lord and the love for his own children.

Well, lording it over others is not an example that is scriptural. Because Paul did not do that. Of course he was a leader. But he did it with a servant attitude.

[30 : 11] Christ's way is the greatest example because it is the servant of all. He was that servant that he showed the church. Now, notice Paul shows his godly leader, Mark, by his transparency.

His transparency in the fact, it's like this. It's like this screen. I can see through it. There's a screen there, but this is, you can see right through it. Notice verses 18 and 19.

And when they came to him, he said to them, You yourselves know how I lived among you. And the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews.

What you had with Paul was an open book. What you see is what you get. And what he is in public is what he is in private. There was no difference.

And this is what he was. It was a transparency of his honesty before the people. In verse 31, notice it tells us there, Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease, night or day, to admonish everyone with tears.

[31 : 27] He was so emotionally taken up with the work of the gospel that it simply moved him to tears. He wasn't scared that people saw him cry.

He just showed them, he showed them the servant attitude. Well, integrity, it means a lot in the private. It's the same in the private as it is in public.

Your life ought to be a single fabric that stems from the fact that you are serving the Lord and the Lord knows everything about us.

He sees us in the private as well. In the 1940s there was a preacher called William Houghton. He was one of the president of the Moody churches in America and Chicago.

And this agnostic, a non-believer came who was contemplated suicide. But he was desperate to hear the truth. But he wouldn't believe it unless he saw a man of integrity and to listen to him.

[32 : 30] So what he did, he got himself a private investigator. He heard about Houghton and he said, I want you to investigate him and tell me what it's like. The investigator came back, private investigator came back after a while and said, He is a man without fault.

A man above reproach. This man went to, the agnostic went to his church and he came to faith through the preaching of Houghton.

Like Houghton, Paul practiced what he preached. Paul was committed to his ministry, but he was committed first and foremost to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now committed means different things to many people. There was a young man who wrote his girlfriend. Remember the days, some of the older you remember writing letters? It's all texts now and everything.

But in those days he said this, My dear, I would climb the highest mountain, swim the widest stream, cross the burning desert. I would die at the stake for you.

[33 : 34] P.S. I will see you on Saturday if it's not raining. Paul was totally committed to the work of Christ because he was called by Christ to do it.

Can you imagine leadership of a church? And it is, what God does is this, he uses the membership because the membership are going to be praying over this.

But he leads you to people that he wants to choose. It is Christ that's calling you to the ministry and it is so important. It is his work. Now Paul loved people.

He loved the people he was ministering to. And notice, he wasn't building an empire for himself. No, remember he just spent a while because he was placing people and churches.

God was beginning churches all over the place. This was Christ's empire. It was entirely for Christ. And he sought the best for everyone. And he did it as we saw with tears.

[34 : 38] Well, Paul committed. What was he committed to then? Well, look at verse 21 and 24 in our passage. Testifying both to Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God.

It is important that we repent of our sins. That is what you do first. You have to say, Lord, I am sorry. And then of the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

So when you repent of your sins, God gives you the gift of faith then to believe in Jesus. Even your faith is not yours. It is God given.

And what a privilege to think that everything about your salvation is a gift from God to you. Of course we come and we say, sorry, that is repentance.

But with that repentance comes the salvation of Christ. And God gives us the faith to place it in the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember a friend of mine, when we used to do road to recovery with guys with addictions.

[35 : 41] And he said to me, Kenny, how can I believe in someone that I don't even love? And I could see where he was coming from. And I said to him, Angie, you're going to have to ask God for you to give you a love for Jesus.

You have to ask God for it. Naturally, it is not in our DNA to love the Lord Jesus Christ. We need it from the Lord.

So he taught and he preached the word of God. This was his chief purpose. That is the chief purpose of our church. The primacy of preaching. Preaching the word of God to teach and preach the Bible.

Now there are five things at least that Paul says in regards to preaching. And things in regards to tithe with it. Notice verse 20. It says, how I did not shrink from declaring to you everything that was profitable.

And teaching you in public and from house to house. So he taught in public. We are told in Acts earlier on chapter 19. He did so in the synagogue.

[36 : 49] And in the hall of Tyrannus. He taught the gospel. But then secondly, we see he did it privately. He went around house to house. Meeting up with people. So that you can do individual speaking about Christ.

People can't do. It is possibly too public in the church. But when you get to sit down with someone. That is the gift of the elders coming to people's homes.

And discussing God's word with them on a one to one basis. He did it privately. Are we good at that? As a church? Do we do our visiting?

Do we have visitors list? Do we care for our people? Thirdly, Paul preached to everybody. Notice in verse 21. He preached to Jews and Greeks.

Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks. Now, the Jews gave him a hard time in Ephesus. Because, remember, he had to leave the synagogue.

[37 : 47] And then went into the hall of Tyrannus to preach. The Gentiles weren't any better. Remember, they caused a riot. Shouting to Diana of the Ephesians. Shouting to their God. They gave them a hard time.

But the thing is this. He preached to Jew and Gentile. It didn't matter. He preached to everyone. Because the gospel is universal. Because it is a saviour.

The saviour that we have is a universal saviour. So, Paul spoke to everyone. Do we speak to everyone? Do you know, I remember that something sticks in mind.

When we used to go and do, as ministers, I'm sure you had them here too. Students come and do placement with you. And two of us were sent up to the islands in the Western Isles.

I was in Stornoway and somewhere else. I'm not going to tell you where. But the elder took him round the parish. And told him the houses that he had to visit. And he went, you can go there, you can go there, you can go there.

[38 : 46] You can go there. But don't go there. They are alcoholics. And I thought, this person has been selective with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel for Paul was for everybody.

That Angi guy I told you about earlier. Who said to me, how can I love Jesus? When I went to his home, he said, what are you doing here? He said, people like you don't come and visit people like me.

Before Angi died of cancer, Angi believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. When we left, I used to phone him. And we used to pray on the phone together.

And we used to pray on the Lord Jesus Christ. And we used to pray on the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we willing to go everywhere with the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Or are we selective? Paul spoke pointedly with the gospel. Look at verse 21. Where it says, as we read here.

[39 : 49] 20, and it goes down. I didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable. And teaching you in public and from the house. He said, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God.

And of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He had an urgency of telling people that you need to turn to God in repentance. He had an urgency to tell them that there is hope in Jesus.

And that there is faith in Jesus alone. You are going to find salvation. It was pointed. It is Christ alone. And nobody else. To some that is offensive nowadays.

I remember a lady who came through our top tots. Came to church one day. It wasn't me that was preaching. But she said, how dare that man preach. And he walked out telling me that I was a sinner.

Paul would tell them that they were sinners. Some folk take offence to that. They don't like it. They don't like it. They don't like it. Because they don't like being told.

[40 : 50] But Paul told them as it was. Are we afraid of offending people? Don't rock the boat. How can you build a church? If that is the way.

If that is kind of your attitude. Paul spoke pointedly about the gospel. But then fifthly. He spoke comprehensively. Notice verse 27.

As we have in our passage. For I did not shrink from declaring to you. The whole counsel of God. He spoke of heaven. He spoke of eternal life.

He spoke of hell. And he spoke of folk going there. To a lost eternity. If they did not trust in the Lord Jesus. Maybe some of us here are thinking.

Of following Jesus. But to be honest. It is too much to ask. If there is too much in regards to Christianity. It is like such a hardship. And so much affliction.

[41 : 46] To follow Jesus. Well what is the other option then? Okay. Keep on living in this world for myself. And all is pleasure. But one day. We are going to face God in judgment.

And only those who die. And Christ. Will be with Christ. The rest he will say. Depart from me. Because I never knew you.

To a lost eternity. Well if we try to save our lives. By living for ourselves. We will lose it. That's what the gospel says.

We have to sign our lives over to Jesus. For Jesus. To save it. Once you have entrusted your life to Jesus. Oh your life might be tough.

Or you might be afflicted. You might have trials. Or you might have. And you will. Sickness is going to come one day. But imagine facing these things without Christ.

[42 : 44] Imagine facing death. Without Jesus. You are all alone. But Paul. Paul said this in regards to his preaching.

In verse 26. Therefore I testify to you this day. That I am innocent of the blood of all. Paul. Did you tell them about my son?

Did you tell them about Jesus? Do you know we are going to be asked that question? Did you tell the folk in Dumfries? That they were lost without Jesus?

Can I count on you? For doing that? Because you are a child of grace. You are the church in Dumfries. Can I count on you?

To do it? Well. Notice. Paul did. And he says I am innocent of the blood of those. Because there were some. Who did not believe in the gospel message.

[43 : 44] But finally we see Paul's advice to fellow workers. Co-workers in the gospel. They were fellow elders in the gospel. And we have that in verses 28.

Down to the verse mark 30. As we read. Pay careful attention to yourselves. And to all the flock. In which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.

To care for the church of God. Which is obtained with his own blood. See how precious it is. I know that after my departure. Fierce wolves will come in among you.

Not sparing the flock. And from among yourselves. Will arise men speaking twisted things. To draw away the disciples. After them. Three things. Elders have to take care of themselves.

Secondly. They have to take care of the flock. The flock. The flock belongs to Jesus. And thirdly. Watch for the enemy. Because he is always prowling.

[44 : 45] To spoil the work of grace. Or anything. To mar the glory of God. We must be on our guard. First of all.

We have to be protected from our own hearts. We need to garrison our own hearts. In the old King James. In the King James version. It says.

Gird up the loins of your mind. It is like pulling everything together. So that your mind is protected. What it meant was. That the soldier had to do this.

And took his garment into his belt. So that he was ready to run. Be on his guard for war. For war. That is how we have to be with our minds.

If we find our minds are drifting away. What do we do? Pull it back. Reign it in. And ask Christ to help us. In our very thoughts.

[45 : 41] Before a man can shepherd God's flock. We need to care first of all. For our own souls. Elders must be an example to the flock.

And that requires attention to ourselves. How can we do that? Well. Because we are doing it before God.

Who knows everything about us. We constantly read his word. How do we know. How to deal with ourselves or others. If we don't read God's word.

For God's word to guide us. And then there is this. Our close attention to relationships. Because we are looking after God's flock. We care for them.

Remember Paul had a problem in Philippi. Where they were looking after themselves more than others. Think of others more. Than you think of yourself. This is what A.W. Tozer said.

[46 : 42] An American preacher and writer. Do you know. He said. Who gives me the most trouble. Do you know. Whom. I pray for the most. Me.

Me. That's the one. That gives me. The most trouble. Myself. Do I bring. Myself. To the throne of grace.

And say Lord. Help me. Help me. Help me. Help me. Remember. This same church. This same church. Was written to. By Christ.

In the book of Revelation. Through John. And he said this. You. Have forsaken. Your first love. What is our first love.

Our first love. Is Jesus. Our last love. Is Jesus. Jesus. It is Jesus. It is Jesus. And if you are forsaken him. Then. Everything.

[47 : 39] Is going to go. Pair shape. And it begins. In the leadership. Of the church. Because. If it begins. In my heart. It's going to have an effect. On the people.

Under. Our care. Think of a shepherd. If he gets away. But laps. With his sheep. And the sheep. Go and do. Whatever they want. You are going to end up.

With a flock. In a mess. Because the shepherd. Didn't look after them. But that's the second thing. We have. Pay careful attention. To yourself. And then.

To the flock. The shepherd. Who does not. Look after himself. Cannot look after. The flock. Of Jesus Christ. We are told. In the sequel. Thirty four.

God condemns. The shepherds. Of Israel. Who fed. Themselves. And didn't care. To feed. The flock. Of Christ. They used. The flock.

[48 : 34] For their own purposes. For their own. This is my. Empire. But they were letting. The flock. Go out. To the wolves. And to be spoiled. And to be scattered. And killed.

The mandate. For paying. Close attention. Is that the Holy Spirit. Chose you. The leader. To be an elder. And an overseer. And the model. We have.

Of that. Surely. Is the good shepherd. That we have. In John. Chapter 10. Read it. And see. As I need to read it. Often. As well.

As how he was to. Look after the sheep. They are God's. Flock. They're not ours. We are under shepherds. They are Christ's children. Children. Remember.

When. Saul. Of Tarshish. Was. Was. Trying to destroy. The church. In his. Emphasy. Emphasy. Emphasy.

[49 : 29] Why. Do you persecute. Me. It was. He wasn't. He would have thought. I'm not persecuting anyone. But people. But do it to the people. And you do it.

To Christ. Christ. But then notice. As well. He said. God's flock. Take care of them. Notice in verse 28. It's all of them. Pay careful attention. To yourself.

And to all. The flock. Are we selective. In our choice. Of who to look after. Or they're easy to visit. They're great visits. You get a nice cup of tea. And a nice cake.

Or whatever. The ones down the road. That's a tough gig. I think I'll leave it. For a few days. Do people get overlooked. Or ignored.

Caring for people. Involves effort. We need to come alongside the flock. We need to be a brother. We need to be a mentor. And we need.

[50 : 25] To help. They are. It is expected of us. Not so much of the people. But of Christ. You know sometimes. When I say to people. And I'll tell you this.

Something that really hurt. A lot. Is people say to you. Oh. You're so busy. You haven't been. And I say. I'm really sorry. I haven't been for a while.

Oh. We know. We know. That you're so busy. How do they. Know. You know recently. I got a phone call. From someone. And the lady said. My mum died.

Would you mind doing. The funeral. And I said. I don't know your mum. She said. My mum was connected. To your church. To your church.

And I went through. Our directory. And I found. Her name. And her address. And I knew nothing. About her. What a shame. I had to apologize.

[51 : 21] To the woman. I told her. She said. But you're so busy. That's a cop out. And it's not good enough. And you know.

What a lesson. To think. It doesn't matter. Who it is. They are under. Christ's care. And what he's done. Is that he's handing them. Over to us.

To care for them. To. In regards to their material. And spiritual needs. Do we miss anyone. If they're not in church. Do we give them a wee phone.

I missed you yesterday. Are you well. How are things with you. I wouldn't let it over a week. Without getting in touch. We feed them. With a word.

We attempt. We imitate. The great shepherd. In our own lives. To others. Remember what Jesus did for us. He left.

- [52 : 17] The ninety and nine. And he came to the far country. Looking for us. We were not keen. And coming. We didn't want anything. To do with him. But he kept on coming.
- Again. And again. And he reaches out. The hand of fellowship. As the good shepherd does. Come to me. And I. Will give you rest.
- Notice then. He warns them. In verse twenty nine. And I know. That among. After my departure. Fierce wolves. Will come in. Among you.
- Not sparing. The flock. This is the spiritual enemy. Who wants to spoil. He hates. Anything. To do. With Christ. Hates anyone. Coming close.
- To Jesus. And you know. Ephesus. Was a healthy church. And Paul. Is warning them. He warned them. Be on your guard. For false teachers.
- [53 : 16] To do that. You need to know. The word. Well. That is why. Elders. Really. Are in a church. As well. Is in case. That the preacher.
- Is preaching. Heresy. And they put a stop to it. They sorted. I remember. Being an elder. In a church. In the highlands. Someone was invited. To preach. And one of the elders.
- At the next session. I wasn't there. Some of the folk. It was a holiday time. And he said. Do you know. He said. That guy. Preached heresy. But the sad thing. Was.
- That no one. In the congregation. Noticed it. They said. That it was really good. That is what. Elders are there for. To make sure. That the preaching. Of the word. Is according.
- To God's word. Because. It is so vital. For your growth. But for the protection. Of the cause. Of Christ. It is.
- [54 : 12] His word. And it's to be protected. But then. Notice. He said. In verse 30. That even. From among you. Your own selves. Will arise.
- Men speaking. Twisted things. To draw away. The disciples. After them. That is why. It's important. For us. To make sure. Oh God. Forbid.
- That we would have. Ministers. In our denomination. That preached heresy. But to continue. That is a matter. Of prayer. Because we could drift. Away.
- Just like that. It happened. Time. And time again. It is important. Not to distort. The truth. But Paul sums up. In verse 35. And what a way.
- To sum up. He said. In all things. I have shown you. That by working hard. In this way. We must help the weak. And remember. The words. Of the Lord Jesus.
- [55 : 08] How he himself said. It is more blessed. To give. Than receive. You get folk. In churches. And they just. Feed me. Feed me. Feed me.
- I just want more. And I'll be back next week. I'm going to do nothing. From Sunday. To next Sunday. And I'll be coming back. For more. More food. And they do nothing. It is better. More blessed.
- To give. Than to receive. A soldier once. Was on his way. To his barracks. In London. He saw a wee boy. His nose. Pressed up. Against the glass.
- Of a bakery. And he went up. And he said. Would you like. Some of these cakes. Oh. I would love them. The wee boy said. And the service man. Went in. And bought him.
- A dozen cakes. And he said. Here you are. And just walked away. He turned away. He felt a tug. On his jacket. On his jacket. And the wee boy said. Mister. Are you God?
- [56 : 04] Are you God? The soldier. Did a God like thing. God. Do people. See us. Doing that.
- Remember. God. So loved the world. That he gave. His only begotten son. That whosoever believes in him. Will not perish. But have everlasting life.

Paul said. In 2nd Corinthians. 8.9. For you know. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. That though he was rich. Yet for your sake. Became poor. So that you.

Through his poverty. Might become. Rich. As God's people. Are we givers. It is the least. I could do. I remember.

Our minister. Growing up. And we always used to get it. On New Year's Day service. And he was always on about. Money. And he said. If there's one thing. I hate.

[57 : 00] He said. He was older. And he could say. If there's one thing. I hate. He said. It should not. Be. When Paul finished. We read the verses.

In 36 to 38. And when he had said these things. He knelt down. And prayed with them all. Quite emotional. Isn't it? And then.

There was much weeping. On a part of all. They embraced Paul. And kissed him. Being sorrowful. That most of all. Because.

Of the word. He had spoken. That they would not see. His face again. And they accompanied him. To the ship. Well.

I'm sure. It would have been tough. To have let this apostle Paul go. That day. They knew they would never see him again. He sailed off. Into the distance.

[57 : 55] Doing what? Giving his life. To Christ. Well. What does he leave behind? He leaves behind. Disciples. Who have been given a commission.

To make disciples. And to go into the world. To make disciples. How are they going to do it? By taking care of themselves. Before God. And to feed the flock.

Of Jesus Christ. Why? Because they all belong. To Jesus. Remember. We read. It was through. His shed blood.

That they were bought. They are precious. To Christ. And of course. Jesus himself said. In regards to the flock. In John. 10.

16. And I have other sheep. That are not of this fold. I must bring them also. And they will listen. To my voice. So there will be one flock.

[58 : 53] And one shepherd. I think there's about. 32. Maybe over 32,000 people. In Dumfries. And there are many.

In Dumfries. Who do not know Jesus. God has blessed the church. By giving evangelists. So to win some.

For Jesus. May God bless you. As you. As you. Bessie yourself. For Jesus Christ. The question is. Are we up for the challenge?

May God bless. His word. Eternal Father. We do pray. And ask. That as we speak these words. That we would. That it would teach.

All of us. Ourselves. Myself. Because Lord. We're before you. Every day. And you know our hearts. And we're sorry. For our sins. That a child of grace.

[59 : 52] Would do. Or think. The way I do. But we thank you Lord. That. That your mercy. Is more. And we thank you.

For your. Cleansing power. For your. That Lord. As we turn to you. That we will find. Forgiveness. In Jesus. And we pray. That we would be. Encouraged.

Always. To do that. So bless us Lord. We ask. In his name. Amen. Our closing item. Of praise. Is in Christ alone.

To God's praise. In Christ alone. My hope is found. He is my life. My strength. My soul. This cornerstone. This solid ground. Where do the fiercest drought.

And storm. What hides the love. What does the peace. When he is most killed. The strife.
He is. In Christ. In Christ. He is. Who took on flesh.

[60 : 47] F Venus. Of God. In Christ. All upon. Robert. Big You. better fi instead. But raise theoe.
The strife. He is. Gesineolph.

Mm. MeditationGHI. It's. The f també. Very good. God.y serenPHE.

Whatund even. in helpless faith. This gift of love and righteousness sworn by the ones He
came to save.

Till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied. For every sin on Him was
laid Here in the death of Christ I live Then in the ground His body plain Light of the world
by darkness slain Then bursting forth in glorious day Up from the grave He rose again And
as He stands in victory Since Christ has lost His grip on me For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ No guilt in life, no fear in death

This is the power of Christ in me From my first cry to final breath Jesus commands my
destiny No power of hell, no scheme of man Can ever walk me from His hand Till He
returns or calls me home Here in the power of Christ I'll stand No power of hell, no
scheme of man Can ever walk me from His hand Till He returns or calls me home Here in
the power of Christ I'll stand We'll conclude with a benediction

[63 : 32] So if you could stand for the benediction Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The
love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with us all now and forevermore And
the people of God said Amen Amen