

'Acts' - Extra Teaching Points #29

Acts 20:28-21:14^(NASB)

Acts 20:28-38

"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. ²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. ³² "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³ "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes. ³⁴ "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me. ³⁵ "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" ³⁶ When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, ³⁸ grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

Q: This is the only place in scripture where Paul talks about sheep and shepherds. Why is that so important to Paul as he is saying goodbye to the Elders at Ephesus?

- He was deeply concerned about the "sheep", and how they would be cared for.
 - Paul had spent 3 years caring for this flock—feeding them, leading them, and protecting them.
 - He knew Ephesus was hostile territory for this young church, and that they would be under attack—from people within the church as well as those outside it.
- He wanted the elders to, first, guard themselves, and then to guard the flock.
 - The church needed elders to confront false doctrine and keep the church on mission.
 - False doctrine isn't just wrong ideas about what the Bible says, it's anything that compromises the church following Jesus and carrying on His mission!

Q: Paul reminded these elders that his work and care for the flock wasn't motivated by personal gain—he supported himself and focused on giving more than receiving. Why is it so important for the elders to remember Paul's example?

- Because the role of the elders is about their relationship to the people.
 - Being an elder isn't a title, it's a relationship with people based on what they need, not what they can give back!
 - It's a relationship focused on giving, and caring for the people – feeding them, leading them, and protecting them – motivated for God by the price He paid for them.
- Without focusing on giving more than receiving, shepherds will shear the sheep instead of feeding them!

Extra thoughts on the role of an Elder:

Q: The doctrines that are the most dangerous to the Church aren't the ones that straight-up deny scripture... most of the time the church will see those for what they are. So where do the most dangerous teachings come from?

- The most dangerous teachings are the ones that emphasize an element, even an important element, that isn't central.
- When an element of teaching becomes central, so large that people can't help but focus on it, debate different views, and treat it as if it is the only thing that matters, the Church loses its focus, and its mission gets lost!
 - In the Middle Ages, it was the theory of purgatory.
 - Life after death is important, but not like that.
 - In the 20th century, it was 'the rapture' and 'end-times' speculation.
 - The 2nd coming is important, but not like that.

- In the 21st century it is _____.
 - When you can fill-in that blank – taking a hard look at yourself in the mirror, and humbly thinking about what you see – you will understand something about the calling of an elder in today’s Church!
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Acts 21:1-14

*When we had parted from them and had set sail, we ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes and from there to Patara; ² and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail. ³ When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left, we kept sailing to Syria and landed **at Tyre**; for there the ship was to unload its cargo. ⁴ **After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven days; and they kept telling Paul through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem.** ⁵ When our days there were ended, we left and started on our journey, while they all, with wives and children, escorted us until we were out of the city. After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we said farewell to one another. ⁶ Then we went on board the ship, and they returned home again.*

*⁷ When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed with them for a day. ⁸ On the next day we left and came to **Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.** ⁹ Now this man had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses. ¹⁰ As we were staying there for some days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. ¹¹ And coming to us, he took Paul’s belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, “**This is what the Holy Spirit says: ‘In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.’**” ¹² When we had heard this, we as well as the local residents began begging him not to go up to Jerusalem. ¹³ Then Paul answered, “**What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**” ¹⁴ And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, “**The will of the Lord be done!**”*

Q: The Spirit used the disciples at Tyre to warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem. Then, in Caesarea, the Spirit sent Agabus to warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem, and told him what would happen if he did. Why would Paul choose to go to Jerusalem anyway?

- We aren’t told why Paul chose to ignore the warning – *this could be a case of Paul kicking open a door that the Spirit had closed* – but there are some facts we know that could have motivated, in some degree, his decision.
 - Paul was carrying a large sum of money he had collected from the Gentile churches to help the poor in the Jerusalem church.
 - He was passionate about getting Jewish and Gentile Christians to see themselves as one body sharing the same faith and the same mission.
 - Paul knew his countrymen were heading for real trouble if they kept trying to maintain and promote zealotry for the Law.
 - Jesus condemned the converting of people to this zealotry in [Matt. 23:15](#).
 - In [Romans 9:1-5](#), Paul expressed his willingness to sacrifice himself if it would help save his fellow Jews; perhaps he thought that suffering their abuse might somehow open their eyes?
 - Whatever specific reasons motivated Paul to face imprisonment or death in Jerusalem, clearly he thought facing it would serve the Name of Jesus.
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Follow Up Assignment

Q: What is your relationship to the flock like?

Q: What is the most dangerous teaching your church is dealing with?

- What are you doing to protect the flock?

Q: Paul was willing to face imprisonment and even death to see Jesus glorified in His people. What are you willing to suffer for the name of Jesus?

- Are you willing to accept being disrespected and dishonored?
- Are you willing to accept being insulted and lied about?
- Are you willing to sacrifice yourself for people who treat you this way?
- What do your answers tell you about your love for Jesus, His people, and what really motivates you?