

Acts
“Jesus” The Sequel
III.) Chp. 13-28 “Witnesses to the end of the earth”
Chp. 18:22-28 The royal route to Rome (3rd trip)
20:17-27

“The Ephesian Pastors Conference: Session one”

I.) Intro.

II.) Vs. 17-21 Knowing how to serve

III.) Vs. 22-27 Finishing the race with joy

I.) Intro.

Every year I attend the senior Pastors Conference and I come back wishing more of you could partake. Well this morning you all have been invited to one of the greatest Pastors conferences ever, “**The Ephesian Pastors conference**”. We get to go behind the scenes and hear what only pastors normally get to hear! Last week we saw the emphasis on the Church and now we see Paul has some things to say to the Pastors about how to lead the Church! So pay close attention to these verses so you can see if I’m following the instructions given here.

II.) Vs. 17-21 Knowing how to serve

Vs. 17 After staying in Troas seven days all except for Paul, sailed to Assos, (Paul went there on foot). From there they all sailed together stopping on all these little islands in the Aegean Sea until they landed Trogyllium a little port town in Asia one mile across the sea from the island of Samos, (today they have called their harbor “St. Paul’s Port” in honor of his landing there.) from there they walked inland to Miletus. As the crow flies it is only 30 miles from Ephesus but the windy road would have taken them several days to get there by foot. There are several general observations in this section:

1. This is **the only speech recorded by Paul given entirely to a Christian audience.**

2. This is the **only speech in Acts given strictly to Pastors**. Now notice that Luke calls them by three different names in this passage:
- a. Vs. 17 **Elders**: This is where we get our word *Presbyterian*. It is borrowed from the Jewish synagogue and describes the **MAN** in his maturity with the Lord.
 - b. Vs. 28a **Overseers**: This is where we get our word *Episcopal* and it means bishop. The word describes the man's **MINISTRY**, which is to oversee the Church.
 - c. Vs. 28b **Shepherds**: Here is where we get our word *pastor* from as it means to feed and tend the flock. So here we see in this word the **METHOD** by which the man exercises his ministry.

Vs. 18-21 Here in this section I see **six aspects** of what makes up **the heart of a pastor**. Paul is going to describe this in the **PAST** tense using the words "***you know***". In other words these qualities of the heart were things that the pastors would have observed in him while he served among them for the last three years.

THE RIGHT HEART

- a. Vs. 17-18 **Called**: Notice here that Paul and his guys land in Miletus then sent for the Pastors in Ephesus and they came to him. Putting this together we see that, "***he sent, and they came to him.***" ***There calling was demonstrated by their coming.*** This reminds me of when Jesus called Peter and his brother Andrew fishing on the Sea of Galilee. He called to them by saying "*Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.*" And they showed that they were called by "*immediately leaving their nets and following Him.*" My point is

this; the heart of a pastor is always available when the Lord calls. These guys had family obligations they had work responsibilities but they set aside time to go to meet with Paul. The bottom line when it comes to pastoring “You make time for things that are important!” If you’re called you go, “You get to, not you got to”

- b. Vs. 19a **Perspective**: Look at who Paul was called to served? He did not serve the People; no he served the Lord. *Paul viewed ministry not as serving people first but rather serving the Lord first*. You can only serve the people to the degree that you first serve the Lord. Other wise you will be a man pleaser rather than a God pleaser. Man this speaks to me about having the right motive in my service.
- c. Vs. 19b **Humility**: Next Paul says that when he was among them that he served in humility. Now part of Paul’s mind set here was thinking about how he worked while he was there and in verse 33-34 he says that he “*coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel and provided for his own necessities*”. But I think it goes deeper then just that to describe a heart that truly esteems others higher then yourself. True humility is not “*thinking poorly of ones self*” it is not thinking of ones self at all. That is possible only when you see yourself in the grace of God and not our merit.
- d. Vs.19c **Compassion**: Paul says that his service among them was with “*many tears*.” What brought about such tears in his heart? Well I think we can see two areas in which Paul was left broken hearted in the pastorate:

1. **The lost**: In Rom. 9:3 Paul speaking of the lost Jews said that he “*wished him self accursed from Christ for my brethren.*” In other words Paul said **if he could** give up his salvation so that the lost could be saved he would have.
 2. **The Church**: In 1 Cor. 11:28-19 Paul in describing what he has gone through in the ministry says, “*what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*” **Paul says that ministry brought about brokenness because of his heart’s deep care for those that were perishing as well as those who were of the body of Christ.**
- e. Vs. 19e **Faithfulness**: Paul uses the word “*trials*” here and then in verse 24 say’s that those trials which happen did not, “*move him.*” In other words ***Paul considered trials part of ministry*** and **faithfulness** to that which God called him characterized his ministry. **Tuff going did not cause Paul to step aside from serving the Lord.** The heart of the pastor must be faithful and not moved no matter what they go through personally.
- f. Vs. 20-21 **Teacher**: At the very core of Paul’s heart was to teach the Church. His ministry was making sure that he held nothing back from them that would be helpful for their growth. In verse 27 he says that he, “*had not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*” Not only that but we read that he did so both “**publicly**” as well as “*house to house*” (**privately**). Further more he says that he was no respecter of persons as he taught both Jew and gentile.

In other words Paul taught those familiar with the Word of God and those not familiar with the Word. Paul's teaching consisted of:

1. **Repentance towards God: “Repentance” is a change of mind that results in a change in behavior towards God.** Paul did not preach against sin, he preached that they needed to have a change of heart towards God. You can preach against sin all you want but until a person has a change of heart towards God they won't let go of their sin. So Paul taught about God's character and when they started seeing the Lord as He really is they turned to God and in so doing turned away from their sin. Have you ever watched a mom try to get their toddler to let go of the glass vase that the child has picked up? If they just snatch it away the child has a conniption but if she takes some toy that the Child has not noticed and starts waving it in front of their face pretty soon they drop the vase and start playing with the toy! You see that is what Paul said in Rom. 2:4 *“that it's His goodness that leads men to repentance.”*
2. **Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ:** Here is the other part of this, trust in the Lord Jesus. Paul does not say that they don't have faith or trust but that they needed to redirect that trust *“toward our Lord Jesus Christ”*. Folks, the world needs to see God differently and then they need to redirect their dependence from themselves to God. So that is what was at the heart of Paul's teaching.

III.) Vs. 22-27 Finishing the race with joy

Vs. 22-24 In the section above Paul's perspective was the past as he used the words "*you know*" now he changes that to the future which the Holy Spirit was showing him was going to happen as he uses the words "*I know*". Here we learn *the secrets of pastoral consistency*. Paul spoke of what ought to be in the heart of a Pastor and now he deals with longevity. *Pastors are in a race but it's not a sprint it's a marathon*. The average pastor's tenure at any church is only four years. Why the turn over? How come so many move on? Well Paul is going share that it's having the wrong goal. All too often the pastor's goal is the Church and it's out come and not Jesus. Look at this:

- a. Vs. 22-23 Paul says that his future is uncertain and likely involved chains and trials.

We all hate uncertainty that is full of disappointments. Folks, if all my joy is found in doing ministry then I'm going to be prone to being bummed.

- b. Vs. 24 So what drove Paul? Well here he tells you, "*Finishing the race with joy!*"

And He lists two here:

1. "*Nor do I count my life dear to myself*": First Paul said that what kept him going was that his life was not his own. Or to put it another way, "*It's not about me!*" We are in a society that places all of its joy on self! Have you ever stopped to look at magazine names over the last 50 years? In the 50's the top selling magazine was called "*Life*". Then in the 60's and into the early 70's it was "*People*". Then in the 80's and into the 90's it was "*Us*". Now the top selling magazines might as well be called "*Self*". That's a sure-fire way of getting wiped out looking out for number one!

2. **“The ministry I received from the Lord”**: Wow, Paul declares that **the ministry that he had received was from the Lord and not man**. The story is told of one of “*Alexander the Greats*” foot soldiers whose responsibility it was to carry the spoil that they had taken in battle. He would load up the mules to carry it to the next destination. One day one of the mules came up lame and Alexander was at the back of all the foot soldiers and noticed that the movement of his troops had come to a stand still. Eager to find out what had happened he rode up to where the soldier was. There was the man whose responsibility it was to carry the spoil carrying everything that was loaded on the mule on his own back as well as leading the other mules. Not knowing it was Alexander the Great who asked why he did not just throw some of the spoil away and keep going the man replied, ***“It is my master who has given me this charge and I shall carry it as long as I am able or die trying!”*** To this Alexander replied, ***“The treasure you are carrying is now yours, come ride with me.”*** We need to remember that we are bearing our Master’s treasure that will reward us for our faithfulness in doing so!

Vs. 25-27 Finally Paul says it for this reason that he had not stopped carrying that load. Paul wanted to make sure that he had left nothing out that was helpful for them. Paul taught the whole council of God not just certain topics. Folk’s this is the reason we go through the Bible verse upon verse chapter upon chapter book upon book. I want to make sure that you get every drop you can out of the Word of God that’s my responsibility, what you do with it is yours! Next week we will look at the second secession of the Ephesian Pastor’s conference!